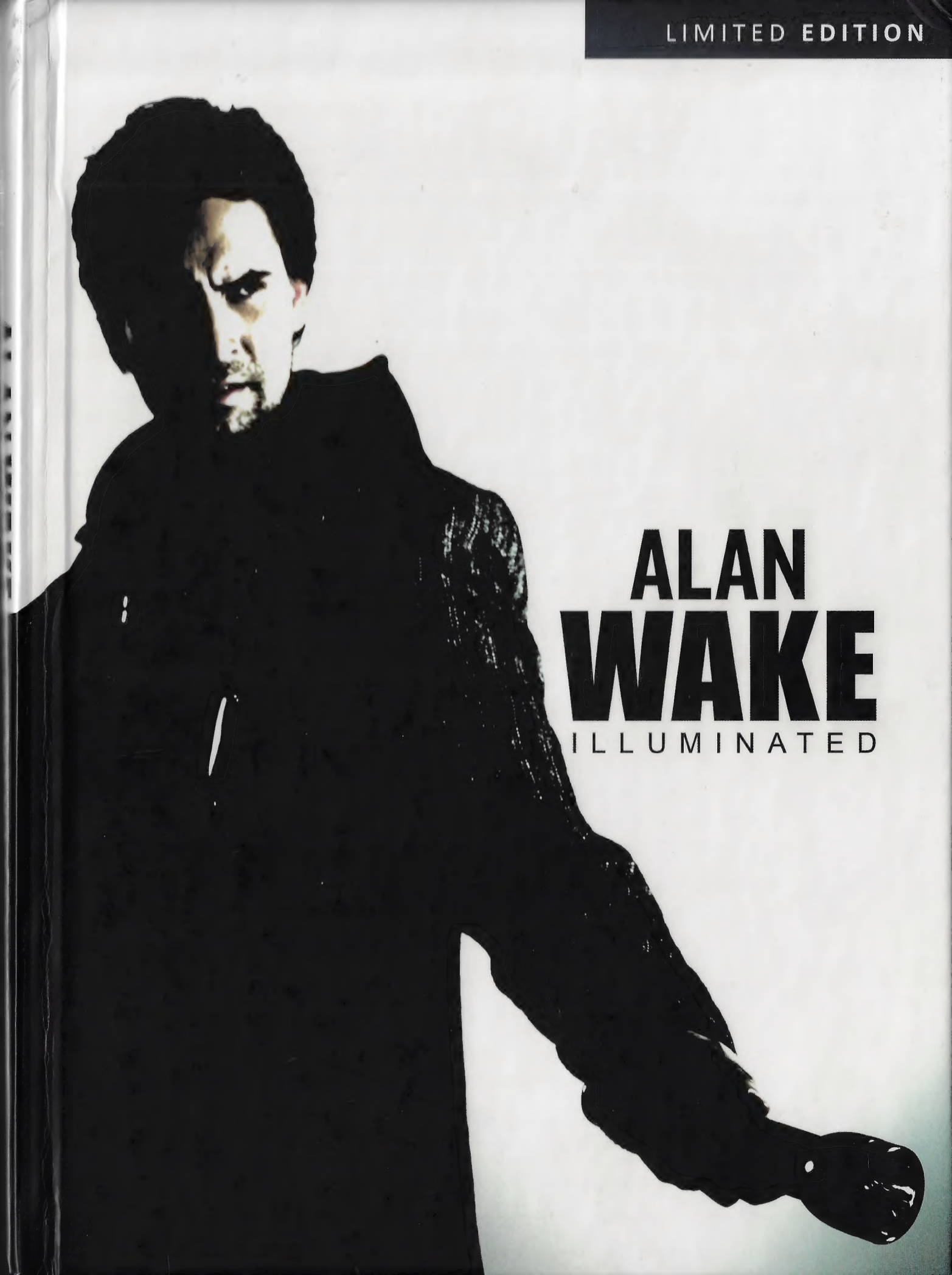
LIMITED EDITION



ALAN WAKE

ILLUMINATED

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ILLUMINATED



CREATING A PSYCHOLOGICAL ACTION THRILLER

ALAN WAKE

CREATING A PSYCHOLOGICAL ACTION THRILLER

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FOREWORD BY SAM LAKE

Making videogames, more than anything, is teamwork. As a writer you cannot help but imagine and visualize the scenes you are writing in your mind. It's what writers do. Working as a part of the team means that based on the writing and on countless brainstorming sessions, you get to see many of those imagined ideas materialize before your eyes, and they are never exactly like you pictured them in your head. The wonderful thing about working with a team of brilliant and talented professionals is that without exception they are surprising, clever, and beautiful in ways you could have never imagined. Seeing these concepts come to life is always further fuel for imagination, a source of inspiration and new ideas, and a wonderful way to work, an on-going dialogue between the story and game design.

In *Alan Wake*, a writer's manuscript pages seem to turn real through sinister supernatural forces, in other words: magic. Here at Remedy, the concept and vision of *Alan Wake* has become real through years of research, prototyping, and hard, dedicated work. It's a labor of love. And that is the most magical thing of all. This book is a nice opportunity to give you a glimpse into some of the work that went on behind closed curtains during the past five years.

After the success of the *Max Payne* games, in some ways, *Alan Wake* has been the notorious second album or second novel for us. That is to say, it was not the easiest or straightest journey. Building this rollercoaster ride was a rollercoaster ride of its own. A lot of life, both good and bad, can fit into five years. But all that has made the end result all the more precious for us. We have put all of our energy and passion into creating the most compelling and innovative title we could possibly pull off. I'm proud of *Alan Wake*. And I'm excited, and a little bit nervous, to finally share our creation with you. Here, at the end, with the game gone gold, I feel it was well worth it. I'm happy to have made this journey. Naturally, I can only speak for myself and for the Remedy team. You have to make up your own mind after playing the game.

Enjoy!

Sam Lake
April 16, 2010
Espoo, Finland


REMEDY



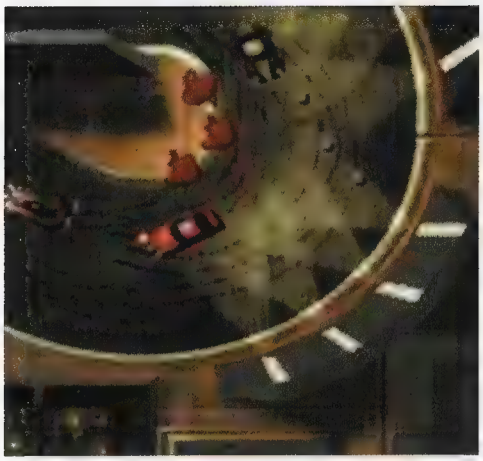
FROM DEATH RALLY TO MAX PAYNE

In early 2010, we celebrated our company's 15th anniversary, which in general is a fantastic milestone for a relatively small independent development house such as Remedy. What makes us especially proud, however, is not the amount of time we've been together as a group, but the quality of product we have released throughout these years. Titles like *Max Payne*, *Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne*, and *Alan Wake* are not just commercial successes, they are also critically regarded as some of best games in the world and the name Remedy has become synonymous with smart and exciting action games.

But how did it all start? How was it possible that a small group of young, ambitious guys from Finland, interested in 3D graphics, audio, and games in general, were able to break into the highly competitive world of AAA game development?

Most of our founding members were heavily engaged in the legendary demoscene in Finland, which was a great stomping ground for people who were passionate about new technologies surrounding 3D graphics and audio. That background in cutting-edge technology, and with it the ability to milk the early computers for performance and beautiful graphics clearly helped and was in many ways the foundation of the company. In 1995, a group of friends that wanted to make games professionally decided to set up a game company and we founded Remedy Entertainment. In these early days, we quite literally were the proverbial "garage band" since we initially worked out of the basement of one of the founding member's parents.



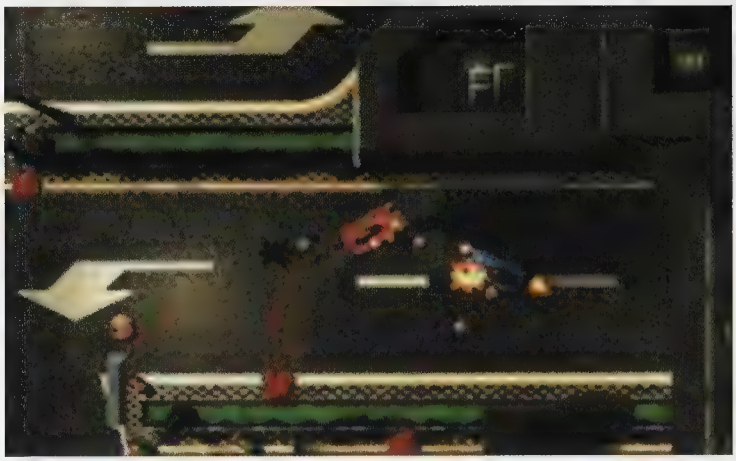




We immediately started to work on our debut game, a top-down perspective racing game called *Death Rally*, and developed a high-performance 3D-engine with texture mapping and lighting effects that were cutting edge at the time. This was a time that was all about passion for gaming, graphics and audio, and we crunched countless hours until we had our first release in hand. It was an ambitious dream that a dozen of Finnish guys could make a top-notch game, but back in the mid-1990s, this was still possible.

On September 6, 1996, after a little over a year of incredibly hard, but exhilarating work, *Death Rally* was released by Apogee Software and GT Interactive. The game sold in excess of 90,000 units, which was a hit back in those days, and it became quickly known for its disturbingly addictive gameplay that immersed players in a "once you start you can't stop" experience. For us, it was a foot in the door, a stepping stone toward bigger things.







After the release of *Death Rally* in late 1996, the team had many discussions about what kind of game we should create next. Among those many ideas that were tossed around was a concept for a "3rd person action game" that, at the time, went by the name *Dark Justice*. A prototype and a design document were shown to 3D Realms, who immediately fell in love with the idea. Work on the title, which later turned into *Max Payne*, began in early 1997.

At the beginning of the project, we were still very much a "garage band" and the team consisted of only a dozen people. The picture below shows the team a little later when we had grown to seventeen people. But unlike the situation with *Death Rally*, we had – for the first time in the company's existence – a project budget, even though a very limited one. As you can imagine, when you have limited resources, you have to get creative to achieve your ambitious dreams and you can see that in almost all aspects of *Max Payne*.



At its core, the idea for the game was a Film Noir style story about a New York undercover cop who is framed for murder and hunted by both the NYPD and the mob. As we had done with our previous game, we immediately started work on new custom technology to build the game world. The new engine, which we called the MAX-FX engine, was designed to take full advantage of 3D acceleration as we were determined to use the latest available hardware as much as possible in order to create a believable New York City as the backdrop for our hero's journey.

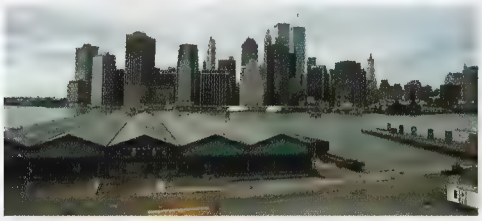
In order to get visual references and textures for the game world, we flew to New York and photographed as much material as we could since that would help us tremendously with the construction of our New York.

We captured typical locations that were needed for *Max Payne*: a classic nighttime view of Manhattan; the grand lobby of the Empire State Building, which we used in some key scenes; fire escapes, which were a classic and immediately recognizable feature of the New York streetscape; a crackhouse in Queens and later one in the Bronx, as well as the surrounding blocks, to show the dirtiest and meanest streets of the city. We also took extensive photographs of subway stations, tunnels, and signage since these places played a big part at the beginning of *Max Payne*, and we ventured out to the Brooklyn docks because a lot of the action in the game occurs in a similar location.









While the reference photos helped us build the game world, we also needed to develop a lot of story-based sequences to tell our ambitious tale. We knew that we would not be able to produce true film sequences or pre-rendered cinematics to bring the story to life. Instead, we decided to use a graphic novel format to visualize the scenes and we ended up using photos as the basis of those shots as well. For the backgrounds of the graphic novel, we again used the photos we had shot in New York, but we also realized that we needed to have actors in our story.

Turning necessity into virtue, we ended up casting ourselves, our families, and our friends for *Max Payne*. Sam Lake, our writer, turned into Max Payne himself (shown here with what later became famous as Max Payne's "constipated grimace"). Sam's mother played the villainous Nicole Horne, his father played a dubious public official, and his brother a gangster. Sam even convinced the janitor of his apartment complex to a mob boss.









Produced on a very tight budget with a still very small team of only twenty people, it took us several years to complete this ambitious title, but it was all worth it when the game was released in 2001. The fugitive undercover cop's journey through the New York City night revolutionized the action genre with cinematic combat sequences, and its use of slow motion "bullet time" and dramatic Film Noir-inspired, narrative-driven gameplay made it one of the best-selling PC games of the year. Console gamers were equally thrilled by the original *Max Payne*, as it later went on to achieve "Greatest Hits" status on the PlayStation® 2 computer entertainment system and "Platinum Hits" recognition on the Xbox® video game system from Microsoft.

The original *Max Payne* has sold over five million units to date worldwide, a nearly unheard of number in the computer game business at the time and a completely unexpected achievement from a small Finnish developer like ourselves. Not only was the game a huge financial success, it was also a critical darling, winning countless awards as an innovative and stylish title. To this day, Max Payne is well-known in the industry for popularizing the concept of "bullet time" in a video game. More than anything, *Max Payne* was a learning process for us, through which we built a company and a team, as well as a game.

With a success like that in our portfolio, we knew that we were a "real" company now. Remedy grew to over twenty people, we signed on for a sequel, and we were given a bigger budget that we'd ever had.

The schedule was very ambitious, but we were confident we could pull it off. Given the significantly bigger budget, we could now hire "real" professional actors. The game continued the story of the hard-boiled detective Max Payne and, after only eighteen months of development, *Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne* was released on October 15, 2003 for PC and a few months later on Xbox and PS2. Working together with Rockstar Game's New York production team, we combined the *Max Payne* hallmark gameplay with new and unmatched production values. The reception was overwhelmingly positive and *Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max of Payne* raised the bar for action games all over again.

In December 2001, we had decided to part with the rights to our beloved creation and all rights to the *Max Payne* franchise were bought from Remedy by 3D Realms and Take Two Interactive, By late 2003, it was time to move on and create something completely new and innovative.









VISUAL PROTOTYPE

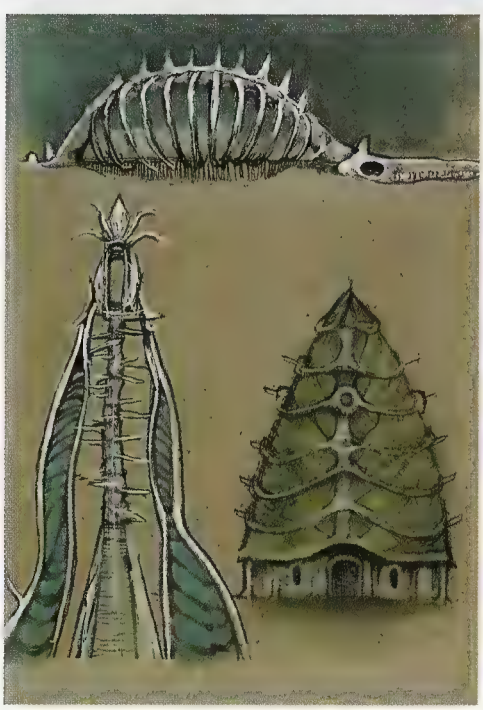
Just as we had done with *Death Rally* and the *Max Payne* games, we immediately started working on new technology for our next title. After spending several years on the relatively confined world of New York City, we were excited to work on open natural spaces and we spent several months developing a new engine to support large open world environments.

We used a strong fantasy theme to test what was possible at this time in a custom-create AAA engine and, as you can see, the engine team was making fantastic progress as these never-before-seen shots from early 2004 demonstrate.

These images from the very first technology demo in early 2004 show our focus on outdoor environments. We already had detailed trees and grass, beautiful water and big, open spaces and you can easily see the precursors of the technology that was later used in the production of *Alan Wake*.







The idea of a fantasy theme resonated quite a bit with the team and these early visual concepts of environments and buildings show where we were thinking about taking this idea.





It is also interesting to note that the fantasy concept art also focused on a charismatic, well dressed lead character and ominous, fantastical enemies.

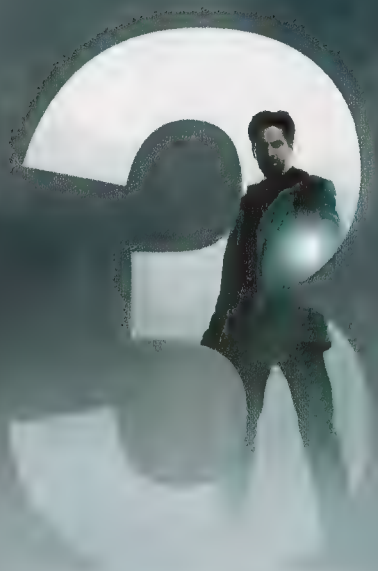






We played with this concept for a while, but ultimately decided against it and moved on to another idea we had discussed after *Max Payne 2* was completed. Much like *Max Payne* had brought Film Noir to computer games, we became very interested in bringing the literary and film genre of the Psychological Action Thriller to the interactive realm.





EARLY BEGINNINGS OF ALAN WAKE

A couple of years before work commenced on *Alan Wake*, Sam had written the first rough draft of a movie screenplay entitled *Undertow*. In it a burned-out protagonist escapes his life to a remote cabin by a lake, only to end up in the middle of a bizarre missing person case. It was a psychological thriller, and over the years we ended up borrowing a lot of material from *Undertow* in the development of *Alan Wake*. Among other things, *Undertow* featured a mystical diver lost in a dark place, the witch Baba Yaga and her bird leg cabin, two senile brothers who may or may not be Viking gods, and the Clicker, an old light switch, a childhood toy with magical powers, a toy Sam actually used to play with when he was a small boy, spending summers at a cabin by a lake in the Finnish countryside.

There were several key elements that we wanted to include in the game right from the beginning. We didn't want the main character to be an action hero, but rather an everyman who has to grow into the role of an action hero, giving him a proper character arc. Initially, we experimented with a much younger hero, possibly a student, as depicted in this early concept.





We were also very happy with how the use of voice-over narration as a storytelling tool had worked out in the *Max Payne* games, and knew that we wanted to use that in the new title as well, but from a slightly different angle. This is where the idea of a writer as a protagonist was born, a professional storyteller whose story this would be. As part of this evolutionary process, Alan became a slightly older person, someone in his 30s. Satisfied with the early concept and the main character, Sam, our writer, began to develop the storyline.

Another area of early conceptualization surrounded the antagonists. Very early on, we wanted an element of Darkness to affect all living things – bears, wolves, and birds. While we ultimately decided not to pursue the larger animals as enemies for Alan, we held on to the Taken birds, mostly for gameplay reasons, but also because it suited the story we wanted to tell, and as a kind of homage to Alfred Hitchcock, one of the masters of the genre we were now working in.



We were always very cognizant about the fact that we were in the process of creating a genre that was new to video games. There had been many horror games in the past, but the subtlety of a psychological thriller had not been achieved before. Much of the difference between the two genres has to do with the antagonists and it is easy to fall into the trap of using humanoid zombies or giant creatures with tentacles.

We knew early on that we wanted to have a strong theme of light versus darkness at the center of the story. Given the critical importance of getting this supernatural opposition right, we went through many conceptual iterations of the "Darkness" in order to hit the right tone for the story.



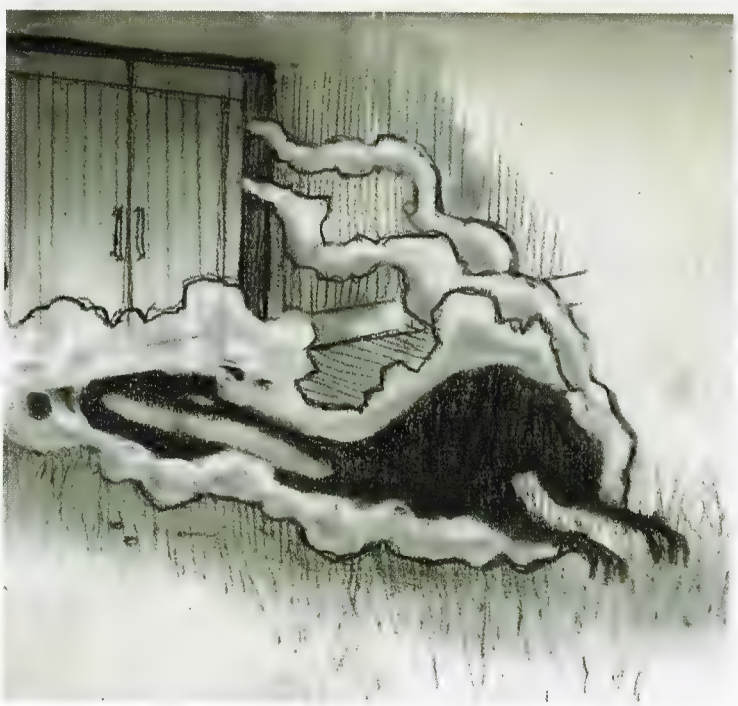


Our goal was to create humanoid enemies that were uncomfortably close to normality, while clearly presenting a sense of danger and eeriness. These early concept images show how darkness and uncertain horror were planned from early on to be central to the events. Initially, however, we had the idea that the humanoid enemies would be literally composed out of the dark waters of Cauldron Lake.

At a later stage, we conceived them as creatures dressed in dark cloaks to hide their true nature. We called these opponents "Shades" for a long time. Finally, we decided that the wispy appearance of black smoke would be more appropriate and we started to develop ideas around that enemy concept, which we called "Taken" from here on. While character and enemy development were progressing, much of the rest of the team focused on our environment.







We had decided to use the Pacific Northwest of the United States as the setting for the title. The idea of an idyllic and quirky all-American small town with dark secrets hiding just beneath the surface was a setting familiar to everyone from popular culture, but it had never really been seen before in videogames. The moody atmosphere and cinematic setting were perfect for the psychological action thriller storyline.

As we researched the Pacific Northwest, a few key images began to influence our creative process. The story required a small town near a lake and we started to develop concepts for the appropriate architecture and setting.

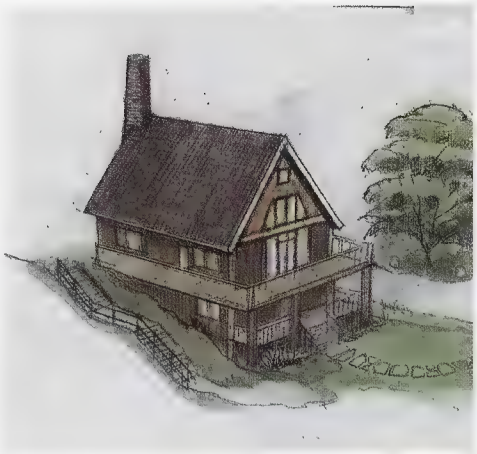


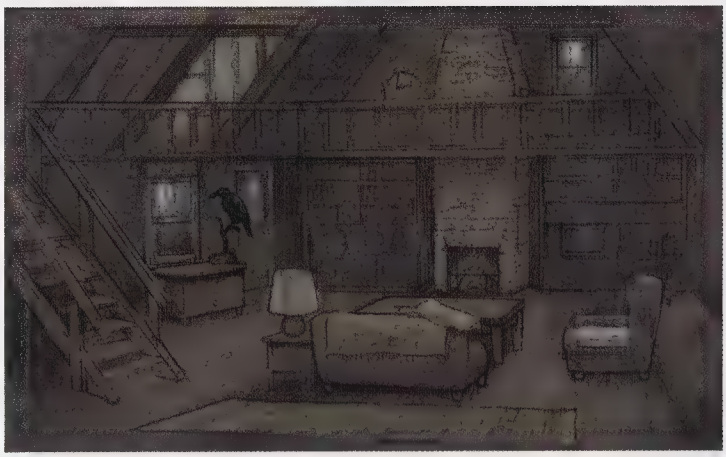




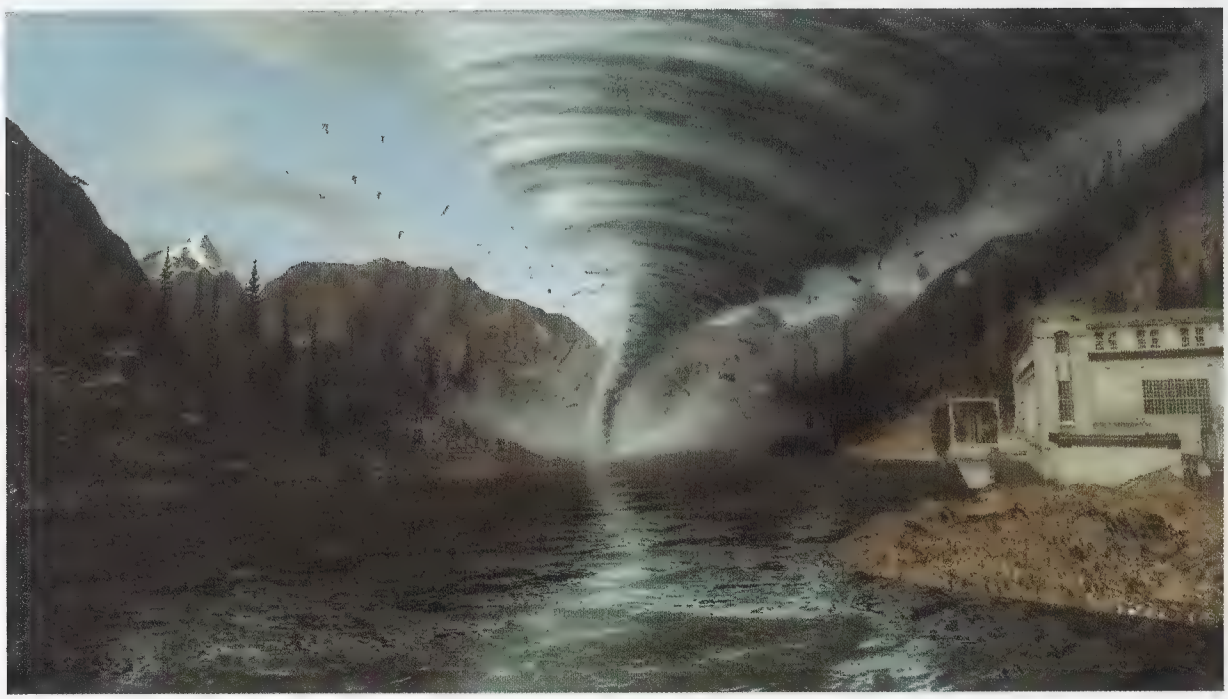
The lighthouse was a recurring architectural element during development. It is both an iconic feature of the Pacific Northwest landscape, and it fit perfectly with the light versus darkness theme of the game.

As Alan's backstory solidified and it became clear that he was going to be a writer who ventured to Bright Falls and stayed in a secluded cabin, we started to concept what this environment would look like. Shown here are the environments that would later evolve into the Elderwood cabin where Alan stays before he heads out for his midnight rendezvous with the kidnapper.





Another element that was part of the vision from early on was the tornado, an impressive force of nature. While it is not especially appropriate to our Pacific Northwest setting, we wanted to present large-scale environmental forces that are pitted against the player. The team did quite a bit of research on tornado behavior and we showed an early version of our implementation in late 2006 at the Intel Developer Forum in San Francisco.



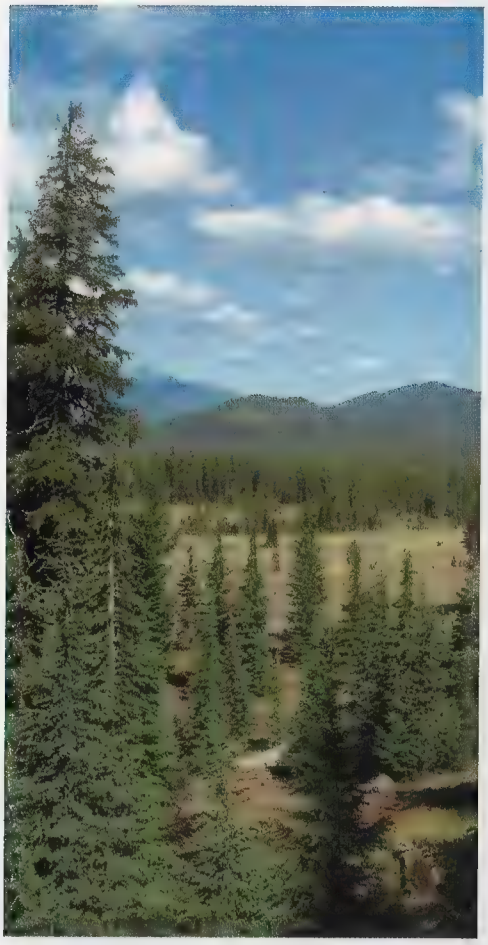




BUILDING THE WORLD OF ALAN WAKE

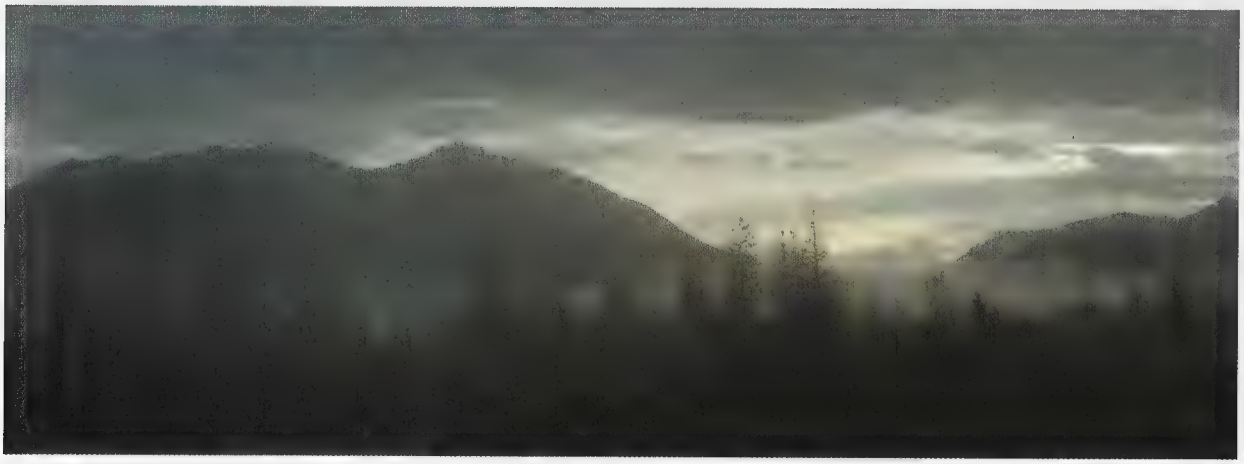
Typical for a Remedy game, we did an enormous amount of research before we started developing the game. Once we had decided on the setting, our team went on several trips to the Pacific Northwest. The Lead Artist, Saku Lehtinen and the Lead Game Designer, Mikael Kasurinen drove over 2000 miles over a period of two weeks and brought back over 40,000 photographs to capture the mood, the richness, and the lighting conditions of the environment.

We visited places like Astoria, Washington, where the film *The Ring* was made, since it was set in a very typical Northwestern coastal town. Several of the locations for the television show *Twin Peaks* were shot in North Bend, which is not very far from Seattle and we took a lot of reference material from there to get that small town feel. While our story has fantastical elements, it was critical that it be deeply rooted in reality in order to be believable. When you have photographs, you can make art more quickly and it becomes more tangible.











We visited ghost towns in the Pacific Northwest, looked at tornado behavior and the structural integrity of these buildings. We hired a landscape artist to ensure that we were doing the environments justice. We even looked at star maps to make sure that the stellar constellations were correct. While we realize that players likely will not recognize the individual components, we strongly believe that all these elements come together to produce a very strong and believable world.







One of the most impressive places the team visited was Crater Lake in Oregon. Saku still remembers the moment when he first walked up to the edge of the cliff – he wasn't expecting much – and his jaw dropped. The water was dark blue and this location was so memorable that it served as the inspiration for Cauldron Lake, which was a very pivotal element in our story. There is even a lodge on the edge of Crater Lake that became a strong influence on our own Cauldron Lake Lodge.





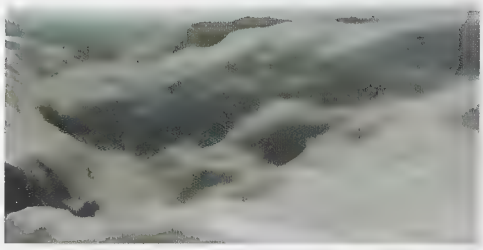


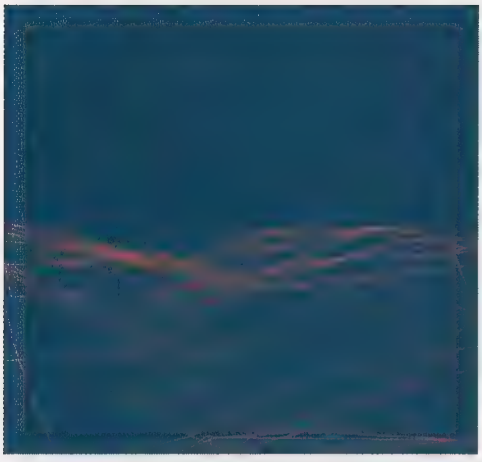
We took a huge amount of inspiration from these trips. The photographs we brought back were instrumental in informing our technologist what the engine needed to support in order to accurately represent the Pacific Northwest environments. The game design at the time called for a giant 100 square kilometer open world environment with an unprecedented amount of detail and it was clear that there was no off-the-shelf engine that could achieve what we wanted to build.



While *Alan Wake* is set in the Pacific Northwest of the United States, as this map indicates, the geographical details of the town and surrounding region are more accurately described as being "inspired by" rather than "based on" the literal geography. Famous geographical features from the entire region, such as Crater Lake from Oregon, the rocky coastline and lush forests of the Western coasts and the deserts of Eastern Washington, have been drawn in closer to the town of Bright Falls so that the Pacific Northwest is essentially presented in a compressed form.

By early 2005, our engine team had reviewed the visual reference photographs and the Writing and Design teams had established the scope of the game world so that they could finish our world construction toolset. What they delivered later that year allowed for very fast construction and iteration, and a never-before-seen amount of environmental detail. Here is a sequence for a very rough wireframe to a finished environment, which can be achieved in our engine within minutes.

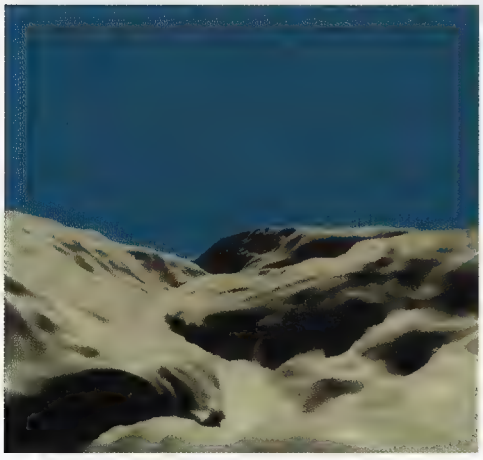














As mentioned earlier, another key element of the game design was the theme of light versus darkness. It was a requirement for our engine to have a dynamic time-of-day lighting system that affected the huge game world. Early on, we spent significant effort writing what was likely the world's most sophisticated game lighting system at that time and by mid-2005, we had a solution that enabled us to achieve our creative goals.

The following sequence shows one of our early forests, built in 2005, in three different lighting conditions. The transitions between them were fully dynamic: the amount and density of the cloud cover, the amount of atmospheric haze, direction, location and density of the sun and the direction of the projected shadows all contributed to a fully realized dynamic atmosphere system.







This series of images shows how our world construction team could combine the fast and elegant construction mechanics of our toolset and then add layers of lighting and other effects to create the desired emotional scene. Here we presented Cauldron Lake Lodge against a moody night sky.



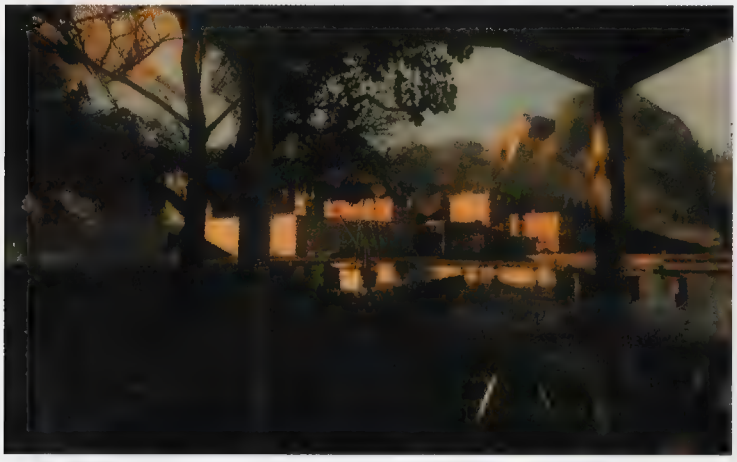






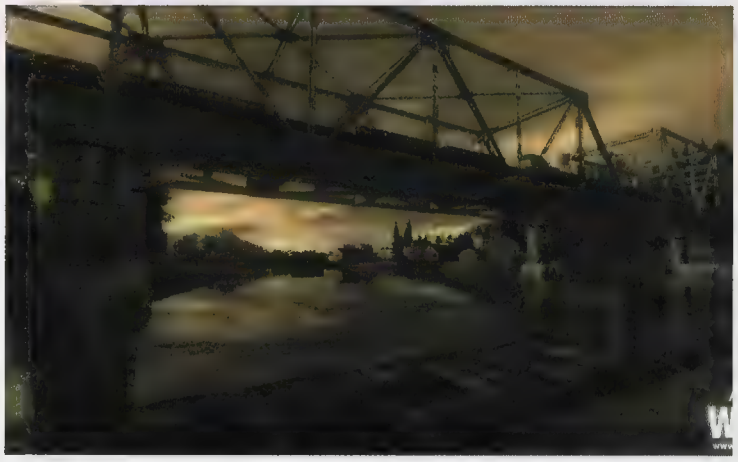
By the middle of 2005, the core engine was complete to the point that allowed us to put together a compelling demonstration of *Alan Wake* that we showed at E3 2005. At that time, we had built the first version of Bright Falls, our small town, and had also completed a first layout of a huge amount of the entire game world with many areas realized to a high level of detail already.

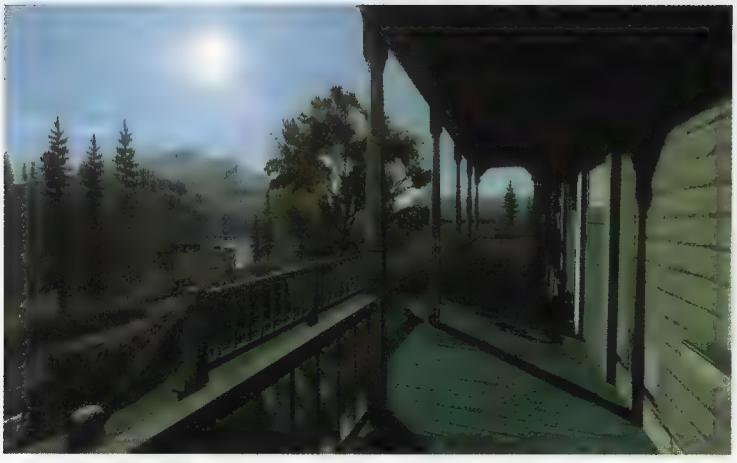
We were ready to go into full development and the industry agreed with us. *Alan Wake* was recognized by several major gaming magazines as one of the most promising games at E3 2005. Large game publishers also agreed that the title had great promise and we were approached by several of the world's largest publishers during the show. We ultimately decided to sign with Microsoft, who had just launched their new Xbox 360 and were excited to bring *Alan Wake* exclusively to its new console.

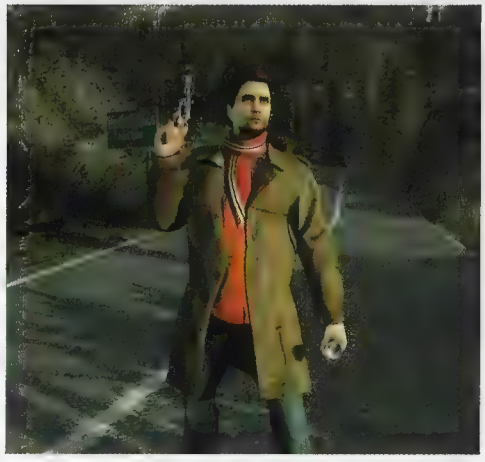
















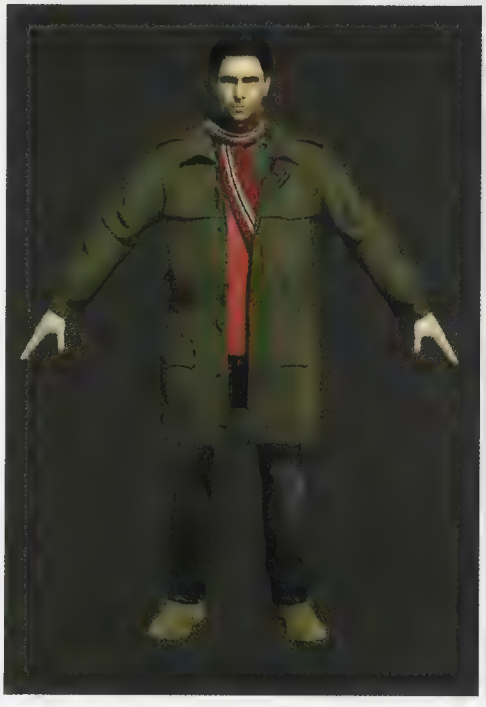
CASTING FOR ALAN WAKE

Now that we had our tool set ready to go and had signed with a world-class publisher, it was time to begin the casting process for the story. Very similar to casting for a film or television production, the key is to find the right actors to transport the intent of the story and to personify the key aspects of their characters. We knew from the outset that it would be critical to populate the town of Bright Falls with iconic characters who had strong and believable personas. We created detailed character descriptions and conducted a very extensive casting process that ultimately led to the quirky and unique people who inhabit the final game world.



Alan Wake

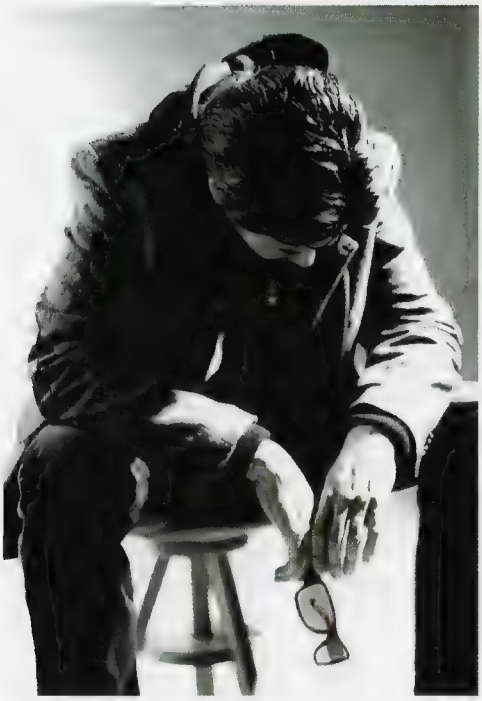
The game was in production for a long time, and many of its characters underwent changes before we found the right approach. Alan Wake himself was certainly one of these characters: he was always a writer, but the details varied. In some of the earliest drafts, he was photosensitive, so he had to wear sunglasses during the day, for example. His clothes changed over the years so in early incarnations, he was more of an adventurous outdoors type, complete with a scarf, trench coat, and glasses.







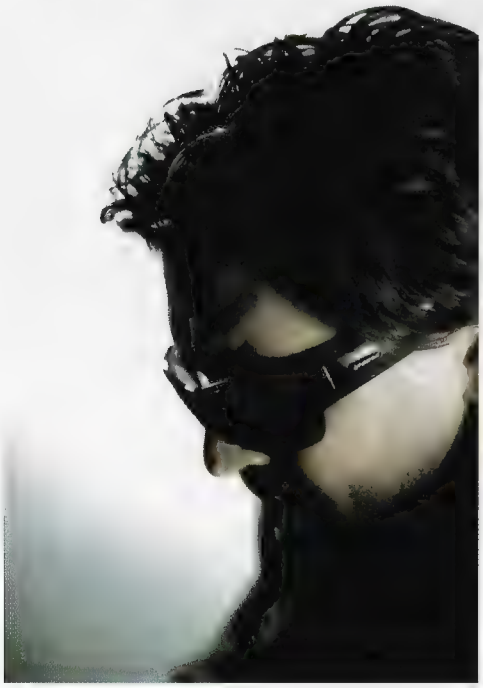






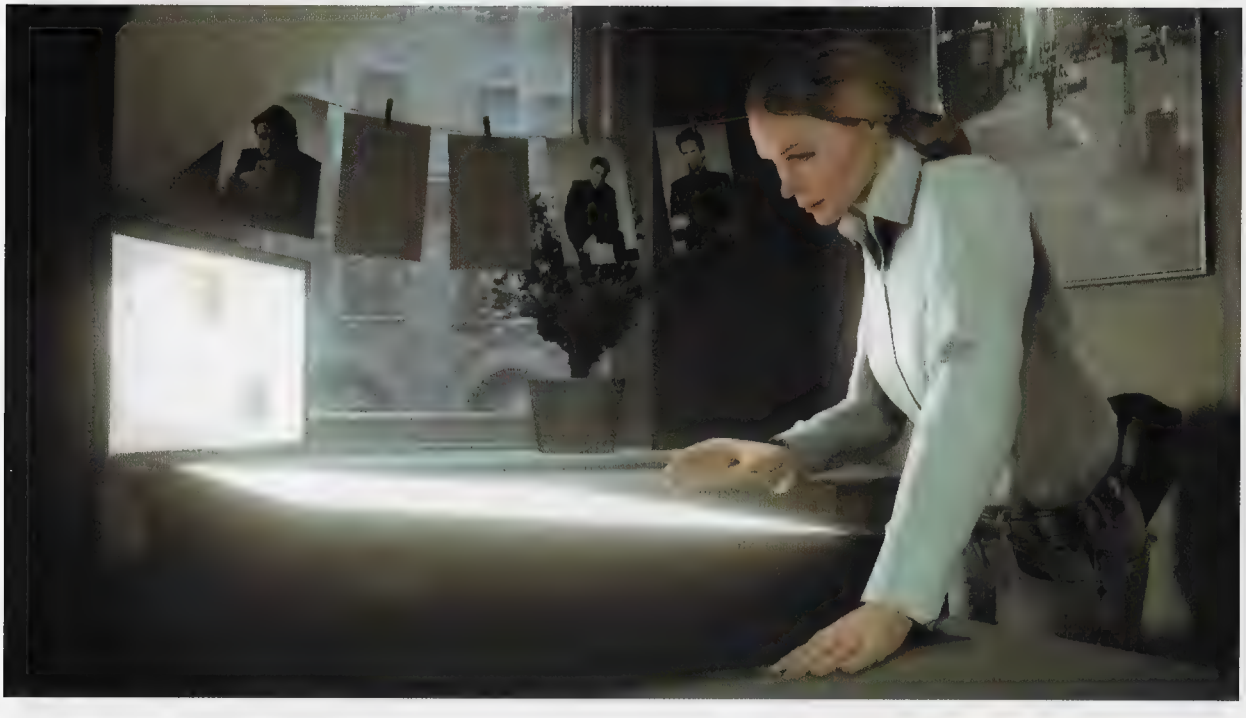
As Wake developed into a darker, more realistic character, a conflicted figure with personal problems, his appearance also changed: Wake started to look more urbane, but also more ragged and tired.

In some ways, Alan Wake is a sort of a composite character, more than the sum of his parts. Much of Alan came from our writing and design, but of course that wasn't anywhere near enough to bring him to life. Throughout the process, we worked with Ilkka Villi, a very talented actor who not only provided Alan with a face, but also a distinctive physical presence with motion capture technology. The final piece of the puzzle came from the fantastic voice work of Matthew Porretta, who made Alan sound appropriately world-weary, angry, and sarcastic – and yet gentle and vulnerable when the moment was right.









Alice Wake



Alice Wake is a professional photographer and the long-suffering wife of Alan Wake. Theirs is a marriage made of love and conflict in equal parts; Wake's temper, his tendency to get in trouble, his inability to write and lack of self-control are constant sources of friction. If it wasn't for Alice's patience, the marriage would have undoubtedly dissolved ages ago. Alice is very smart and competent, and in some ways, she has more control over Wake's fate than he does; after all, she arranged their trip to Bright Falls and tries to get Wake help from Dr. Hartman (she is, of course, unaware of the mysteries of Cauldron Lake, or the doctor's secret motivations). She is willing to put a lot of effort into helping her husband and fixing their marriage.

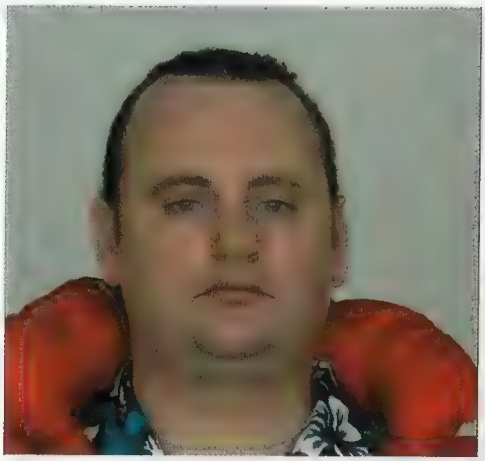








Alice's role, and her relationship with Wake, took a lot of exploring until we got it right. In early drafts, she was Wake's girlfriend, then his wife. She was dead, killed in a car accident before the game even began. At one point, Dr. Hartman had a wife who looked exactly like Alice. We tried many different things with her. In the end, we didn't want Alice to be just a damsel in distress, even though we knew that she had to be what motivated Wake to go through all this trouble. She disappears early on in the game, but we made sure to put in the flashback sequences in New York City, so the player would understand the characters' relationship.







Barry Wheeler



Barry Wheeler is Alan's literary agent and best friend – one of his only friends, really, as Wake is a hard man to get along with. He's noisy and greedy, and a bit of a weasel, but for all his faults and weaknesses, Barry is a loyal friend to Alan. They've known each other since childhood, and there's a strong bond of love and mutual respect between them. Having a character like that around makes Alan seem more human and gives him an important outlet for his emotions. Barry may well be the character who has gone through the least number of changes through the various versions of the story.

From a storytelling point of view, Barry serves several roles. Perhaps the most obvious is comic relief; we wanted a character who is funny, someone who can break the tension and provide contrast. Also, when horrible things happen, it's difficult to have the player character react strongly; if the player doesn't feel the same way, it breaks the immersion. Barry wasn't limited in his reactions. He also gave Alan someone to talk to about what was going on, which served our needs for exposition and character development.









Sarah Breaker

Sarah Breaker is the sheriff of Bright Falls. She's a fairly easygoing person, but she's also well aware of her responsibilities: she's competent, confident, in charge, and despite her relative youth, she doesn't feel the need to prove anything to anyone. She's relaxed in her authority. She knows everyone in the community, and has earned their respect. She knows that in this town, the sheriff's job is not just about hauling people into the drunk tank on Saturday night. When faced with the horror of the Dark Presence, she takes it in stride. For her, it's part of the job description, even if she's never seen anything quite as bad as this before.

Sarah has been a presence in the story for a long time, but her role has changed greatly from her early appearances. At one point, she was a sculptor; at another, she was the radio host. For a time, she was a strong romantic interest for Wake. They weren't bad ideas, but they didn't quite work. In the end, her role as sheriff allowed us to make the best use of her. The voice actor Jessica Alexander was originally brought in for the role of Alice, but when we heard her, we knew we had our Sarah.



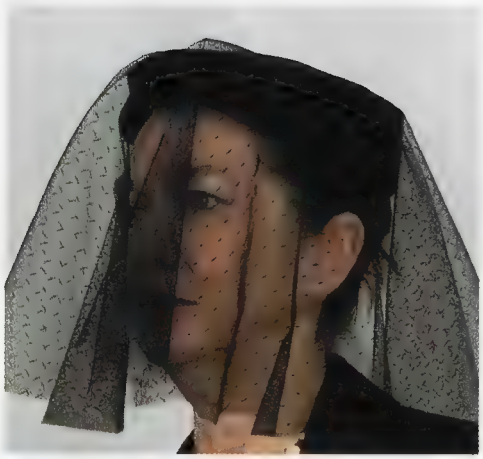




Doctor Emil Hartman



Doctor Emil Hartman is a psychiatrist whose clinic, the Cauldron Lake Lodge, specializes in the treatment of artists with creative problems. In some ways, he may actually be the most clear-cut bad guy in the story: he's intelligent, cultured, educated, cunning, and armed with a malicious disregard for others. Hartman is a dangerous man with a huge ego. His smooth exterior hides a ruthless and completely amoral nature. He's made a career out of manipulating and taking advantage of others and he has an insidious agenda. He's aware of a strange power deep below Cauldron Lake, and he has seen it at work, shaping reality. He knows that those who involve themselves with it tend to get horribly damaged or consumed by it, so he gets others to interact with it while he directs things behind the scenes. There's quite a bit of backstory to Hartman that we only hint at. The voice actor Mark Blum captured our good doctor with aplomb, as well as voicing the parts of Maurice Horton and Dr. Barclay Colvin.









Barbara Jagger

Even though Barbara Jagger looks and often acts like an old woman, albeit a haughty, forceful, cold, and cruel one, she isn't really human. The real Barbara Jagger drowned decades ago and what masquerades as her now is an alien force of darkness patterned after a long-dead person. It acts like a human being out of habit; using her form gives the dark presence a certain awareness and perspective it never had before. Long-dead thoughts color its view of the world. But its true motives are almost unfathomable; it exists and acts out of a primal urge to grow and experience new things, and while it could justifiably be called evil, that implies an awareness of right and wrong (and cause and effect) that the Dark Presence isn't really capable of. She's utterly selfish and incapable of real empathy. Human emotions are meaningful to her only as far as they can be manipulated to serve her goals. The voice actor Kate Weiman gave a terrifically frightening performance for this role.







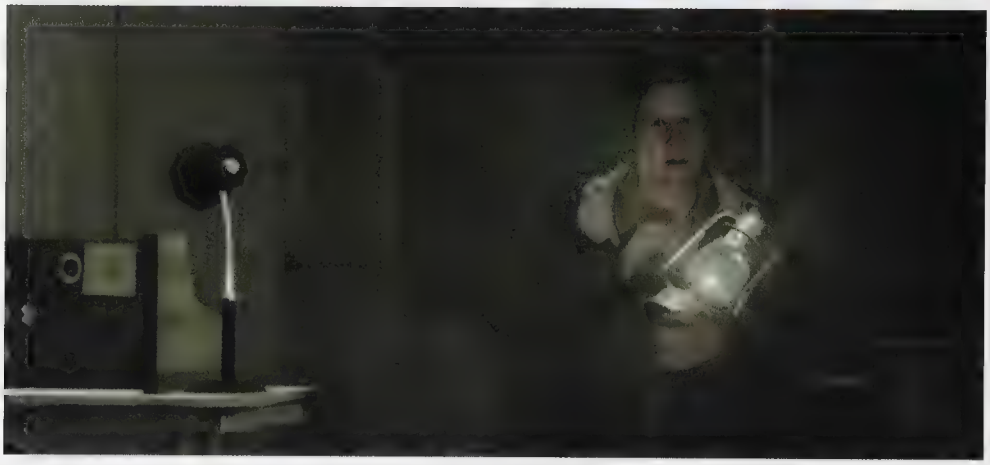
Pat Maine



Pat Maine is the local radio host in the idyllic small town of Bright Falls. He is an older gentleman, a confident, professional, leisurely speaker. He comes across as warm and genuine, and since he's mostly on at night, he often keeps company for people working late and those with trouble sleeping. Jovial, but strong-willed and respected for his integrity, Maine is the voice of the community. He's a constant presence throughout the game and can be heard on numerous radios as Alan Wake journeys through the darkness. We wanted players to feel reassured when they heard him and the voice actor, R.J. Allison, who has a background in radio, brought genuine warmth to his voice.



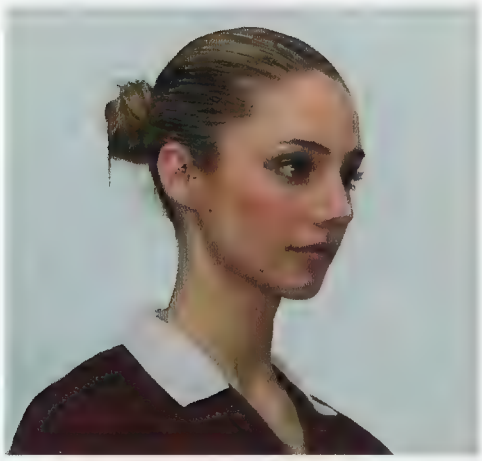






Cynthia Weaver

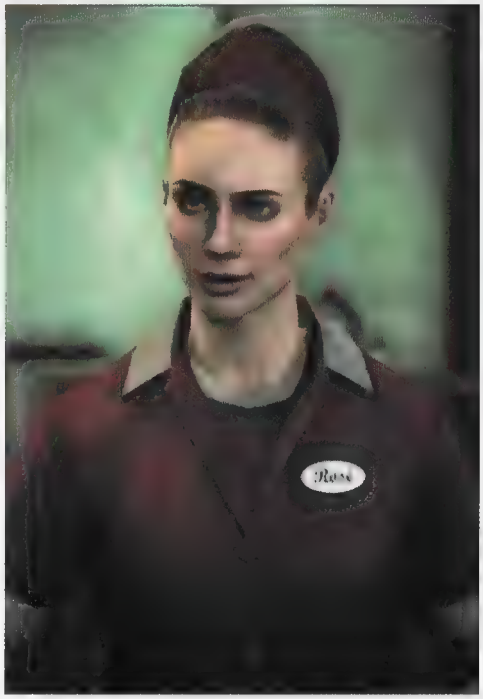
Cynthia Weaver, the Lamp Lady, is a local eccentric and has been mentally unbalanced since her encounter with the darkness many decades ago. As a result, she is obsessed with light and terrified of the dark. In her daily life, she follows elaborate rituals that are designed to keep her safe. For all her problems, she's not delusional. There really is an evil darkness out there, but she has been damaged by it. She receives strange messages from beyond and strives to fulfill instructions she's never quite understood. Luckily for Wake, she hasn't wavered in her mission to protect the secret she has placed in the Well-Lit Room.







Rose Marigold



Rose Marigold works as a waitress at the Oh Deer Diner. She's Alan Wake's biggest fan, as she readily tells anyone who's listening, but her obsession with him isn't malicious: she's simply starstruck. Rose is a well-liked young lady, but you probably wouldn't catch anyone describing her as bright. She's had a rough childhood, and books and movies have always been her escape to a happier reality. She fantasizes about a more exciting and glamorous life. It would be a bit of an exaggeration to say she's in love with Alan Wake. Rather, he represents the fame and glamour lacking in her own life. While she tends to have her head in the clouds, she's a well-liked and genuinely caring person.









Mott

Mott has gone through many changes, but he was intended as a bad guy from the start. He's coarse, violent, and nasty. He's done a little time in jail for the illegal possession of firearms, and he has a history of mental problems. Mott isn't particularly intelligent, but he often manages to be cunning. He's an emotional infant with low self-esteem and he attempts to compensate for it with a nasty disposition.

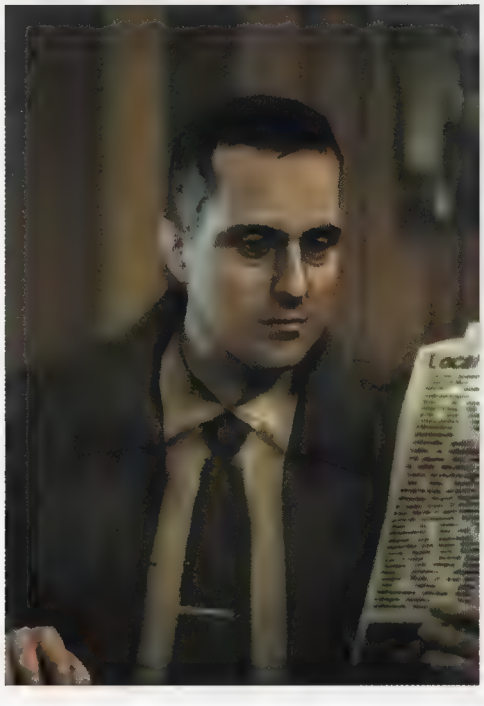
He tends to divide people into two groups: those he despises and attempts to bully, and those he respects and desperately attempts to please. He's easily manipulated by the latter, which makes him a perfect tool for Dr. Hartman, who employs Mott both as a caretaker and a thug. If he wasn't so malicious, he'd be pitiful and pathetic. In very early drafts of the story, Mott owned the local gas station.







Rusty



Rusty is a park ranger in the Elderwood National Park, located near Bright Falls. He's a man of simple pleasures: he loves the woods, a bit of hunting or fishing, and a good cup of coffee. He's another character who has far more backstory than we could comfortably fit into the game – we only hint at it. Rusty is Rose's boyfriend and though there's quite a bit of an age difference, he doesn't mind if she doesn't. If he has a failing, it's that he doesn't have a shred of glamour about him, and Rose can't help but be aware of that. But he treats her with tenderness and respect, which is more than she ever got from anyone else in her life. Rusty's a good man who comes to a bad end.









Carl Stucky

Carl Stucky is the owner of the local gas station, who also has a side business of renting cabins to tourists. He's a fairly nice blue-collar guy, but unfortunately he gets waylaid by the Dark Presence when it diverts the Wakes at the Oh Deer Diner. Later on, he also becomes a Taken – the very first encountered by Alan Wake. In far earlier versions of the story, Stucky was a constant presence, but his role and personality changed many times. At one point, he was a caretaker at the Cauldron Lake Lodge, working for Dr. Hartman, but he ended up owning the gas station, so in essence, he and Mott switched roles.







Odin Anderson

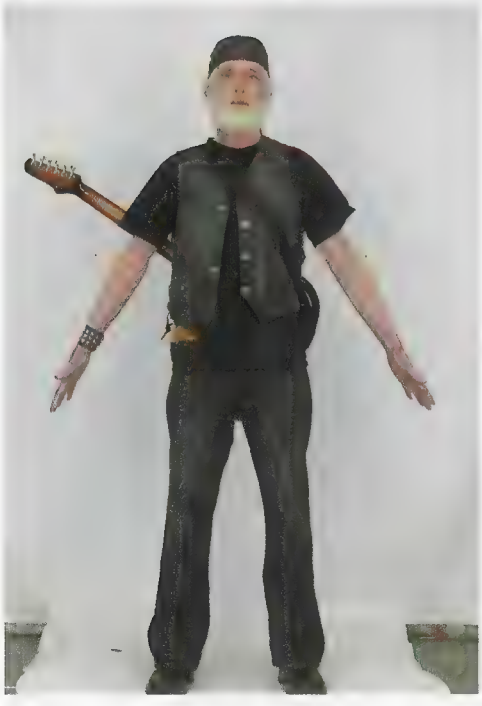
Odin Anderson, along with his brother Tor, is a former rock star. He used to be in a band called Old Gods of Asgard, and he changed his first name to go with their chosen theme of Norse gods. But that was in the 70s; now he's old, and his years of living a wild rock'n'roll lifestyle have taken their toll on his mind and body. What's more, strange supernatural forces have also sapped his will. He's hard of hearing, tends to shout a little more than is strictly necessary, and he seems to have an endless list of complaints about his failing body. Still, despite being senile and demented, Odin manages to be pretty easygoing, and on his better days, he's a lot of fun to be around. Oh, and a devious bastard, to boot.











Tor Anderson

Tor Anderson is another former rocker. Like his brother Odin, he changed his name when they formed Old Gods of Asgard. Physically, he's in better condition than Odin, though not by much. While he was never a very positive person to begin with, Tor tends to be surly and aggressive. It often sounds like he hates everything and everyone; he's aware of the way his body and mind are deteriorating, and it frustrates him to no end. But like Odin, Tor isn't entirely gone. They have both experienced the wonders and horrors of Cauldron Lake, and they have the scars to show for it, but they aren't ready to quit rocking just yet. The voice actor Lloyd Floyd, the "Man of 1000 Voices," took the role of Tor and brought great life to it, along with several roles such as the Hitchhiker, Walter Snyder, and our beloved *Night Springs* Narrator.







Special Agent Robert Nightingale



Robert Nightingale is from the FBI. A few years ago, he had a traumatic run-in with a supernatural force and he lost his partner Finn to it. He's a human wreck who generally manages to put up a good front, but his trusty hip flask helps him get through the bad days, which seem to be increasingly plentiful. His agenda in Bright Falls is mysterious: he's after Wake, but he doesn't seem to really be on official business, and he doesn't have much of a plan. He makes up for this by waving his badge around and pulling rank, and he generally seems to suffer from both a hair-trigger temper and a tendency to use excessive force. He's willing to go to any lengths to catch Wake, but for all his desperate zeal, he's not a murderer. When given the chance to shoot the unconscious Wake, he can't do it. There's much more to Nightingale than we've really shown thus far, and hopefully we'll get a chance to explore him in more depth in the future.

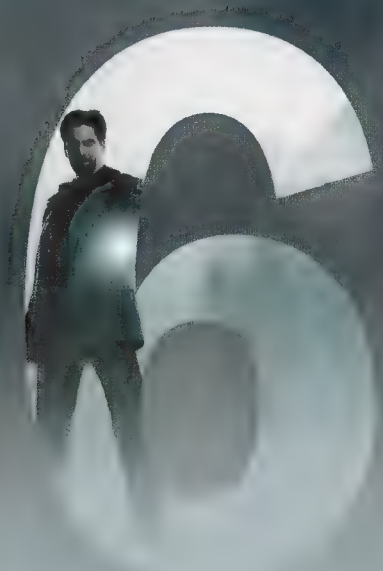




Thomas Zane

Thomas Zane was the man who first awakened the Dark Presence in 1970, when his lover, Barbara Jagger, drowned in Cauldron Lake. He was already aware that there was something magical about this place, that his words had the power to change things. He attempted to bring her back, but it was a terrible mistake. For all the power the lake had, restoring the dead to life was not one of them. What he got was clothed in her skin, but it wasn't her. After a great deal of struggle, he managed to take her back down into the depths, but he had to sacrifice himself to do it. Stuck in the Dark Place somewhere below and beyond Cauldron Lake, Thomas Zane still survives after all these decades. He has adapted to life in an environment that is alien and hostile to human life, and he's helping Wake the best he can. Zane, too, has been a part of the story of Alan Wake for a long time. In the earliest drafts, he was referred to as a "spaceman", a strange figure who appeared on televisions – his old-fashioned diving suit made him look like an astronaut of sorts. He's yet another character we have substantial backstory for, but we quickly found he works best as a mysterious presence.





REFINING ALAN WAKE

After we had first unveiled the concept of *Alan Wake* at E3 2005, we intentionally went quiet for a while and continued to develop the story and characters, the game world, and the underlying technology of the game. More than a year after its initial showing, *Alan Wake* returned to the public in September 2006 at the X06 event in Barcelona, Spain, with a demo that was enthusiastically received by both press and fans.

In this early demo mission, Alan has to collect the keys to his cabin at the local gas station, where he meets the town's car mechanic Mott. Even at this early point, Alan's internal voiceover was used to give context to what was happening, much like how we had approached the concept in the two *Max Payne* games. Once Alan had received the cabin keys from Mott, the mechanic ends the conversation with the eerie words: "Must be tough, knowing that your words change things". It was quite effective in throwing everyone in the audience off.





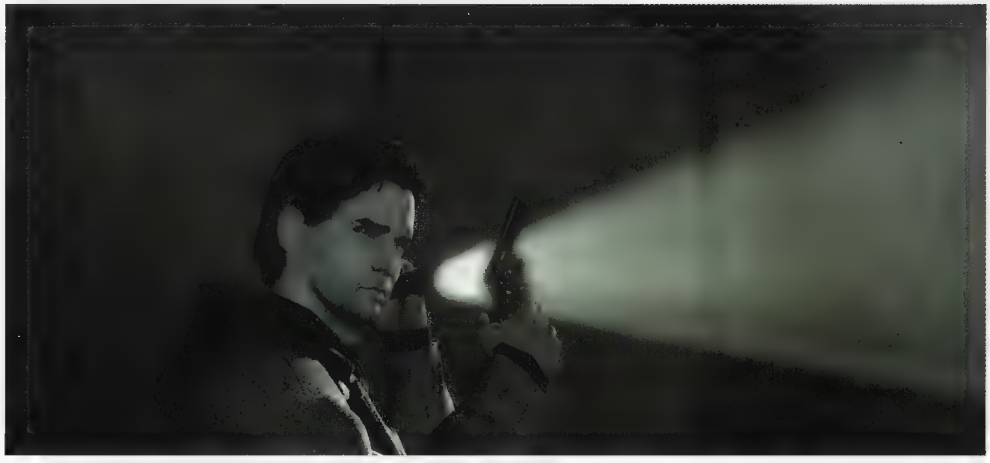
Once Alan had the keys, he drove off toward the mountain cabin. Alan's inner dialogue makes clear that in his new novel, the main character, who was also a writer, had to drive to a cabin, only to be stopped by a hitchhiker. A few moments later, a hitchhiker appears next to the road and Alan decides to pick him up. Had Mott been right? Were Alan's words coming true? It was only going to get stranger as the mission continued.





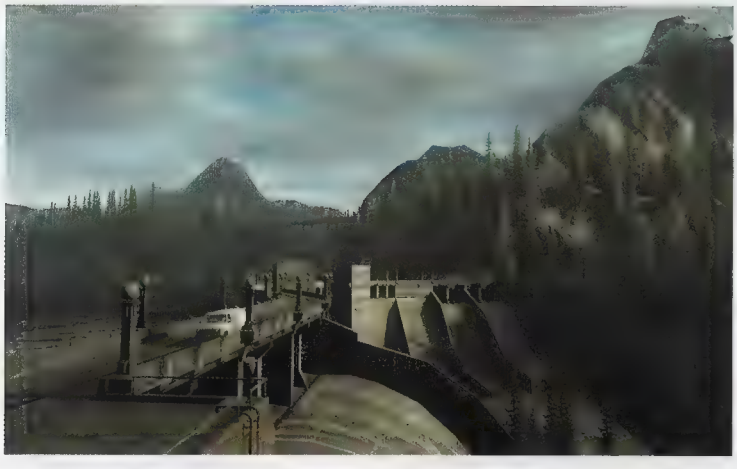
While driving along the road, Alan tells the hitchhiker about the similarities between what was happening in the real world and his new novel, and that in the novel, the hitchhiker was about to die. Only seconds later, the pair encounters a crashed car ahead with someone lying in the middle of the road. Alan stops his vehicle and gets out to see if he can help the injured person when suddenly a sixteen-wheeler appears from nowhere and crashes into the parked car where the hitchhiker is still sitting in the passenger seat, presumably getting killed by the violent impact. Again, Alan's story seems to be coming true.

After the crash, Alan looks down at the body that is lying on the road in front of him, and it is someone who looks exactly like Alan, right down to the clothes. All of a sudden, the world is blurring in front of Alan's eyes and he loses consciousness. When he awakens, it is nighttime and Alan finds himself armed with a flashlight and a handgun. He has to make his way to the cabin on foot, has to cross an unstable hanging bridge, and finally encounters his enemies, men wearing dark cloaks, for the first time. While this sequence of events didn't survive to the final game, echoes of it can clearly be seen in the opening dream sequence and in the *Night Springs* episode, "The Doomed Samaritan."





The demo was incredibly successful and many attendees of X06 felt that Alan Wake had been the most impressive game of the show. Excited, we went back to Finland and continued to work on the storyline and began implementing early missions of the game. The engine had made incredible progress during the first roughly two years of development as these screenshots from 2006 demonstrate.





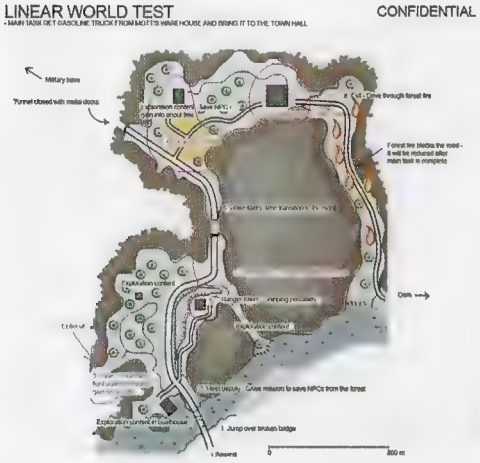


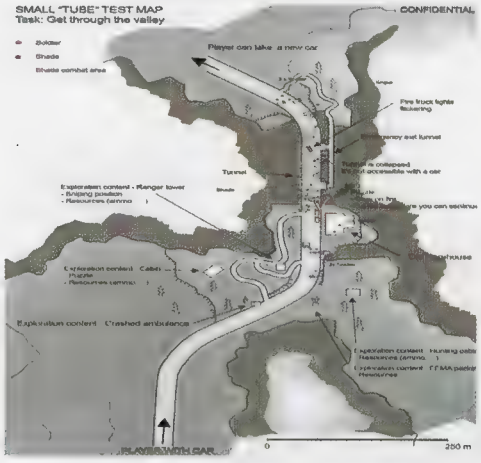






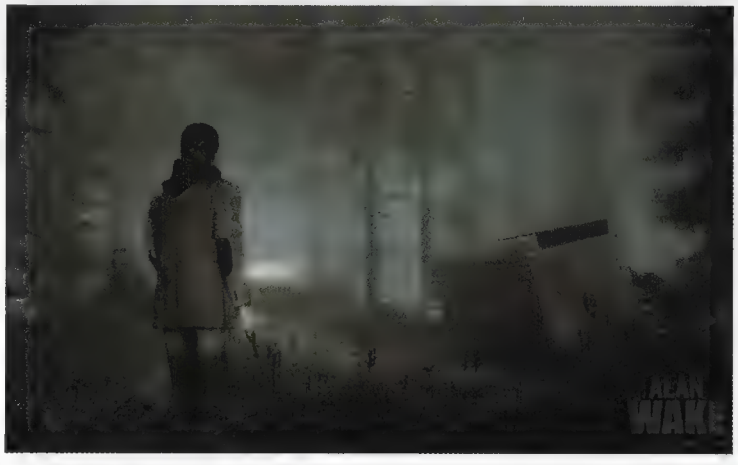
After X06, we again went quiet, but this time for a much longer period. We did not release any screenshots until October 2008 and did not show any public demonstration of the game until much later in June 2009 at E3. The press and the fans speculated what had happened and the reality is that we had a super-ambitious concept – the industry's first Psychological Action Thriller that was set in a giant open world. Getting the story and the game exactly right took a lot of experimentation. As we implemented early story missions between Fall 2006 and Fall 2007, it became increasingly obvious that the concept of an entirely open game world that spanned a hundred square kilometers was not conducive for telling a thriller. In September 2007, after having spent a significant amount of time on the underlying technology for an open world game, we decided to focus the game fully on the story. These two maps show our first tests with purely linear mission structures.





By doing so, we put more focus on specific areas of the game world, optimizing them for each mission, as opposed to trying to make everything work everywhere. It was a hard decision, but also a liberating one since we could now focus on getting every minute aspect of the story just right and to be in full control of the player experience at all times. Once that decision had been made, we started to make rapid progress. These are screenshots from 2008.



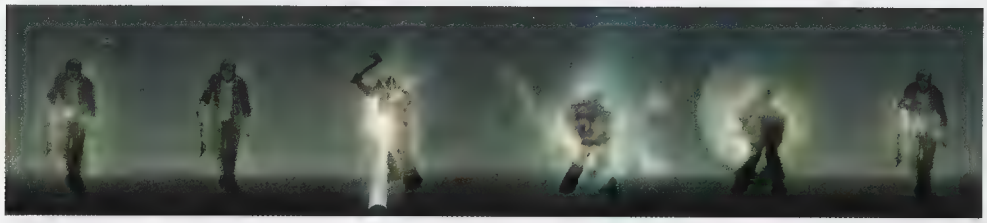


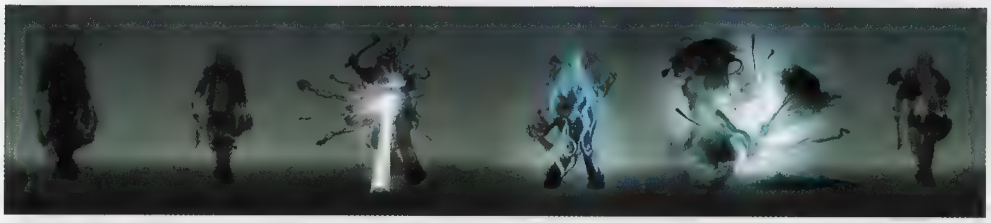
Aside from providing greater precision for storytelling, another side effect of focusing the game on linear missions was that the engine team could optimize the game world. Consequently, the visual quality jumped dramatically.

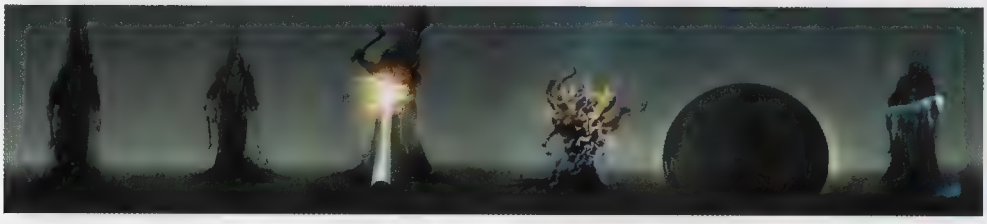




Aside from the game world, we also continued to develop the visual representation Alan's antagonists. By this time, we had decided to go with the metaphor of a smoke-like enemy, but still experimented with the visualization of how the impact of light would be represented on their "shadow shields."







Satisfied with the shield solutions for humanoid antagonists, we added two more enemy types: possessed flocks of ravens and inanimate objects that could be taken over by the Dark Presence. We felt great about where we were with the game. It had taken us longer to figure everything out than we wanted, but we now had our storyline, our world looked great, and we had the enemies visually nailed. By the end of 2007, we went into full production of the story missions.



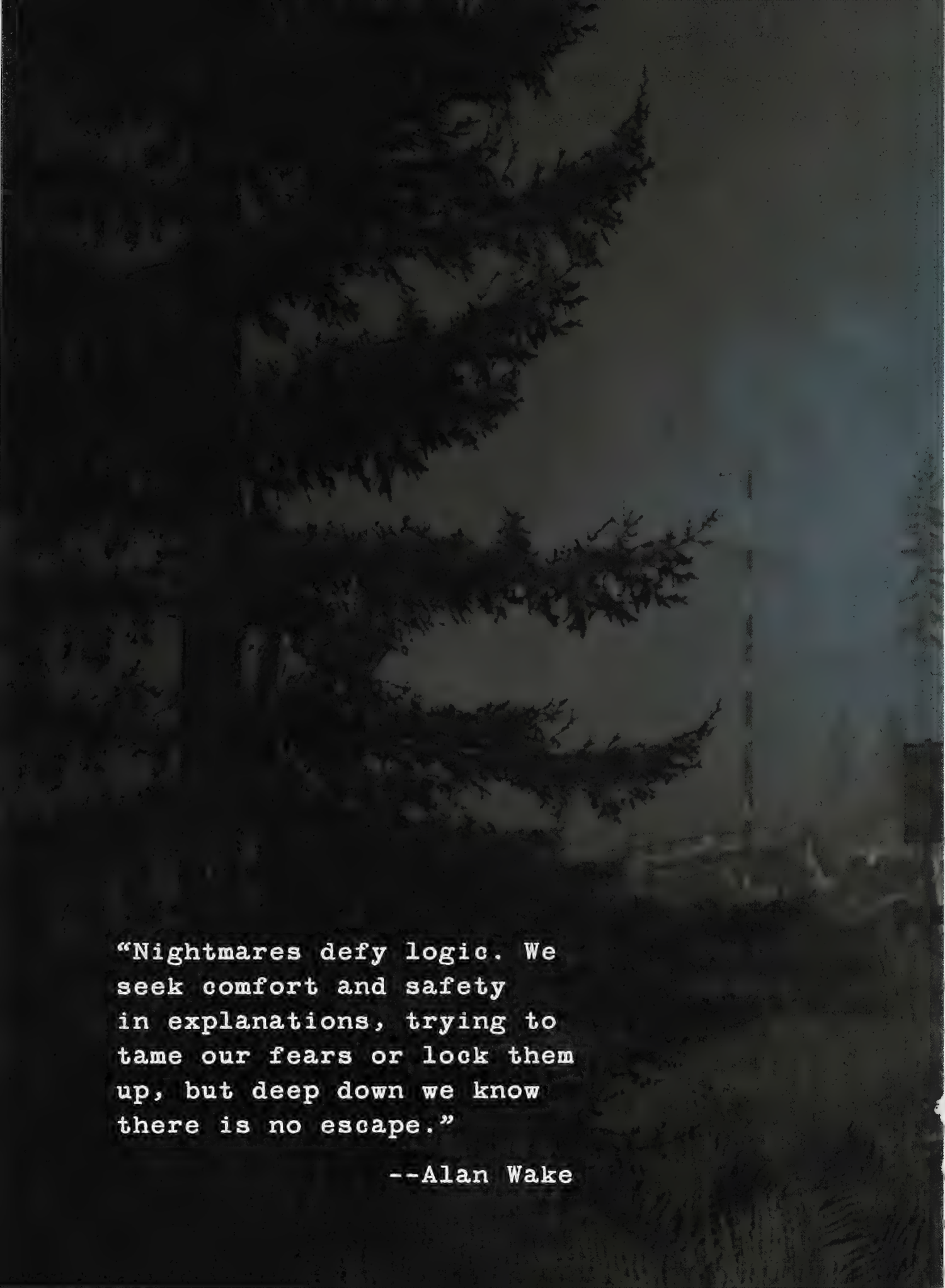



FALLS



BUILDING A PYSCHOLOGICAL ACTION THRILLER

Alan Wake was created as a psychological action thriller. From the outset, we knew we did not simply want to make a conventional shooter. We wanted to make a thriller, but we didn't want to go down the familiar genre routes of fantasy and science fiction. Instead, we wanted to explore characters and tell a story. The psychological thrillers we were familiar with from literature, film, and television became natural touchstones for us in our development of *Alan Wake*. These stories deal with ordinary people in extraordinary situations and often revolve around a core question: Is the threat real, or is it in the hero's head? This drove two very important decisions in the development of the game, namely the lead character and the setting. The lead had to be an everyman, someone players could relate to. So as the character of Alan developed, specifically as a writer, we recognized the opportunity to play with these ideas of reality, hallucination, creativity, and the dangers of an active imagination. The other important factor was the decision to set the game in a realistic location, one that would have a strong sense of place that people would immediately recognize. These decisions dictated so much of what followed. Indeed, everything from our core story to our enemy types to the light-based gameplay mechanic came out of that very ancient, very powerful, and yet ordinary fear of being alone in the woods at night.



"Nightmares defy logic. We seek comfort and safety in explanations, trying to tame our fears or lock them up, but deep down we know there is no escape."

--Alan Wake

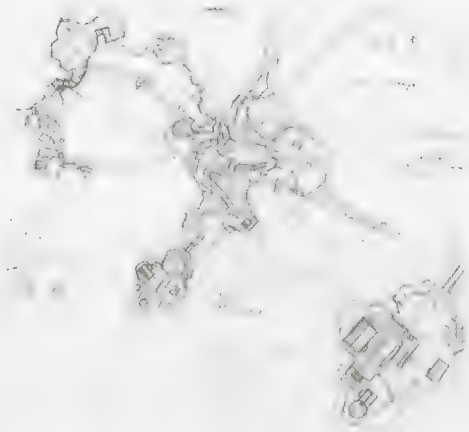


EPISODE ONE

NIGHTMARE



The opening dream sequence features our lighthouse, which has been a fixture of our trailers and demos over the many years of production. Conceptually a lighthouse works perfectly for Alan Wake; the intense beam of light that sweeps the darkness relentlessly is a powerful image. It's also a building that's closely associated with treacherous waters – a recurring team in the game's fiction. The design was inspired by the Northhead Lighthouse, located at the mouth of the Columbia River in Cape Disappointment State Park.



Our original plans included a level mid-way through the game in which the Alan and Barry attempt to escape the Taken by seeking refuge in the lighthouse. While this was cut, the lighthouse somehow managed to find its way back into the game during the opening dream sequence. Rest assured, it's not the last you'll see of this location.

The level walkthrough depicts Alan's path through an environment that is not so much Bright Falls as the town of Night Springs. Given that the game's opening levels were fairly narrative-heavy, focusing as they do on Alan and Alice's arrival in Bright Falls, we felt it was essential to start the game off with a bang. We were also able to include some training, introduce our main enemy type, and suggest that something darker lurks beneath the town's idyllic surface.





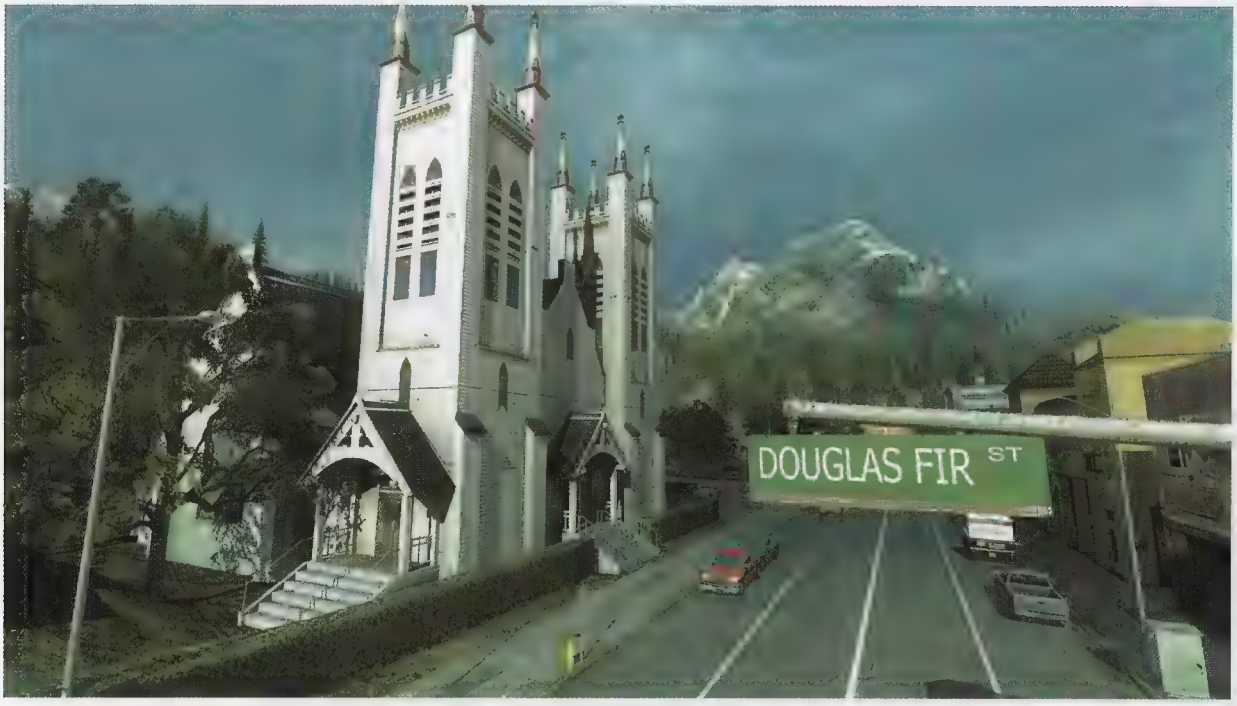
Alan and Alice's arrival to the town changed several times over the years. As some of our earlier trailers showed, we were very attracted to the *Shining*-style overhead view of a car making its way to the town, but we eventually settled on an arrival by ferry. It was appropriate to the setting and allowed us get Alan and Alice out of the car and interacting with townsfolk. We were able to have a slow approach to the town and show Alan and Alice's different reactions to this new place, which was helpful in defining their characters. In earlier versions of the ferry arrival we had a more violent encounter between Alan and Mott as a way of showing Alan's hot-tempered nature and introducing Mott before his big reveal as the kidnapper, but it never felt completely right and we ultimately went for a more low-key encounter.





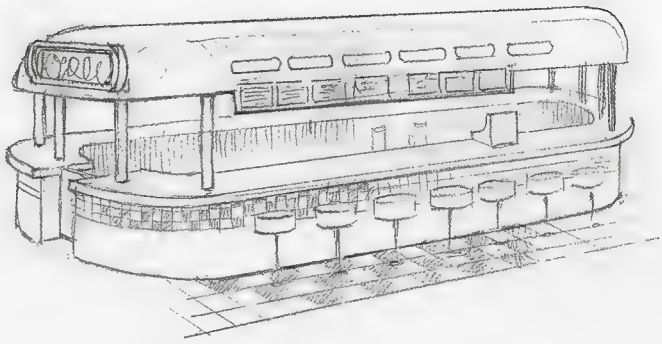
Early designs of town proper were larger in scale. Here, the Bright Falls church resembles something closer to a European-style cathedral. In order to more closely match the regional and specifically small-town setting of Bright Falls, this was redesigned as a smaller church.

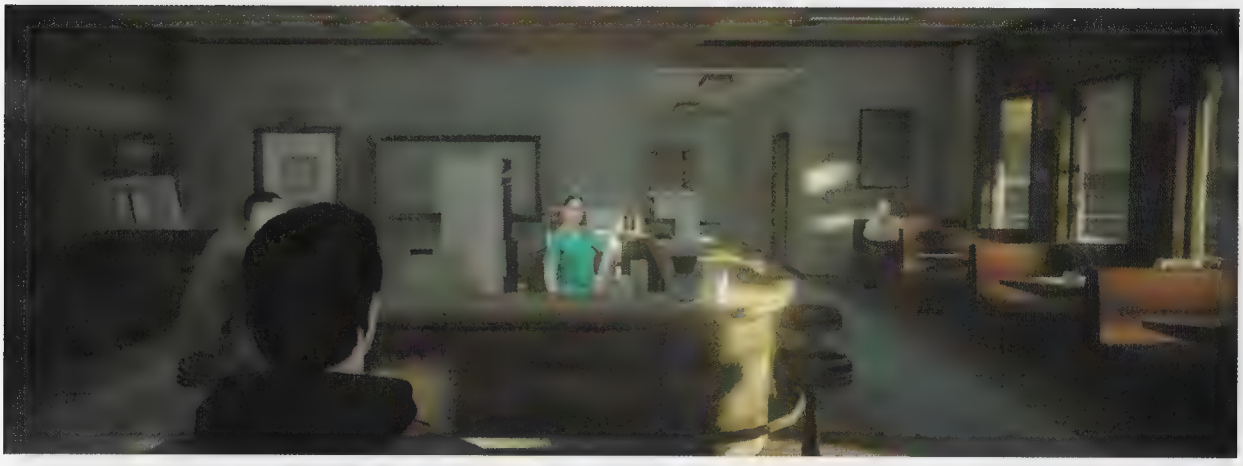
Notice also the wide streets and multistory buildings, which were all reduced in scale in final iterations of the game. The game world itself, however, remains very large and reflects our initial open world plans.



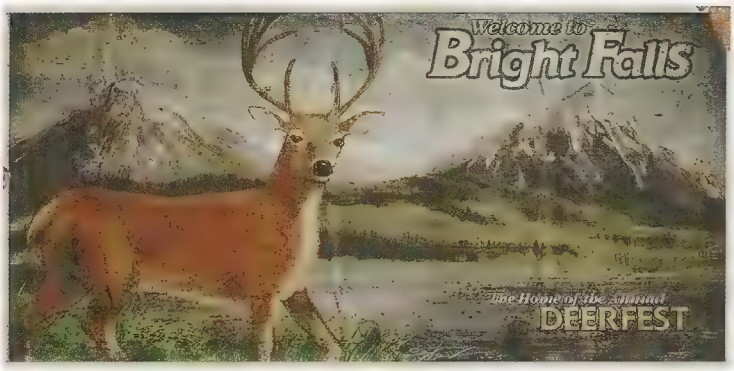


The diner served as a great entry point to the town, where we could introduce key characters who would later play a larger role in the story of Alan Wake, such as Rusty, the Anderson Brothers, and Cynthia Weaver. Our early inspirations came from the films we were familiar with, and our trip to the Pacific Northwest helped solidify our vision. We found wonderful models for our diner along the coast and in places like Twedes in North Bend, which had been made famous in *Twin Peaks*.









We covered the walls with art and props that would reflect a traditional (and perhaps stereotypical) version of the Pacific Northwest, and we used the Alan Wake standee at the front of the diner as a quick way of showing that our hero was a well-known writer — one that couldn't escape his fame or his reputation.

The darker atmosphere toward the rear of the diner was necessary to create a plausible encounter between Alan and Barbara Jagger, whose aversion to light becomes more apparent later in the game. In this first meeting, we only suggest the darkness that would later take center stage.





Bird Leg Cabin was a very important set for us insofar as it had to to match the regional setting, but also evoke the mystery and strangeness of an island cabin that had sunk into the lake decades earlier. Given that the Slavic folk tale of Baba Yaga served as inspiration for Barbara Jagger, we followed these stories in our design of Thomas Zane's cabin. The old folklore described a witch who flew around in a mortar and lived in a hut that stood on chicken legs.







The original concept for Bird Leg Cabin was that it would actually rise onto its legs at night and move about. During the day, its legs would protrude from under the porch as bird leg-shaped roots and the stone foot upon which it sat would work as a kind of "nest." The final design is somewhat less adventurous, but we wanted to keep the bird-theme alive in more than just the name. Seen from the mainland, the cabin has a distinct owl-like "face" with its round windows and the beak-like chimney, and while it's difficult to discern when standing on it, the shape of the island itself is that of a bird's leg.



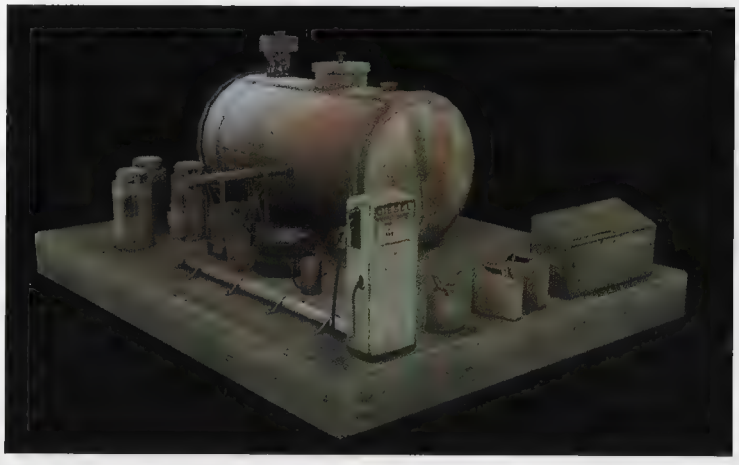




After waking up confused and alone in a crashed car, Alan sees Stucky's gas station, which serves as a beacon, guiding the player through the forest (though our route is far from direct). Like the safe havens, it represents an island of safety he must fight his way to. The abandoned gas station offers little solace, of course, and Alan's mystery deepens here as he discovers he has lost a week. The Deerfest signboard with a day counter was an economical way of communicating this "missing time."

As some early screenshots show, Mott was originally the proprietor of the gas station, before he became the nameless kidnapper in the current game. Stucky then evolved into one of our first Taken bosses.







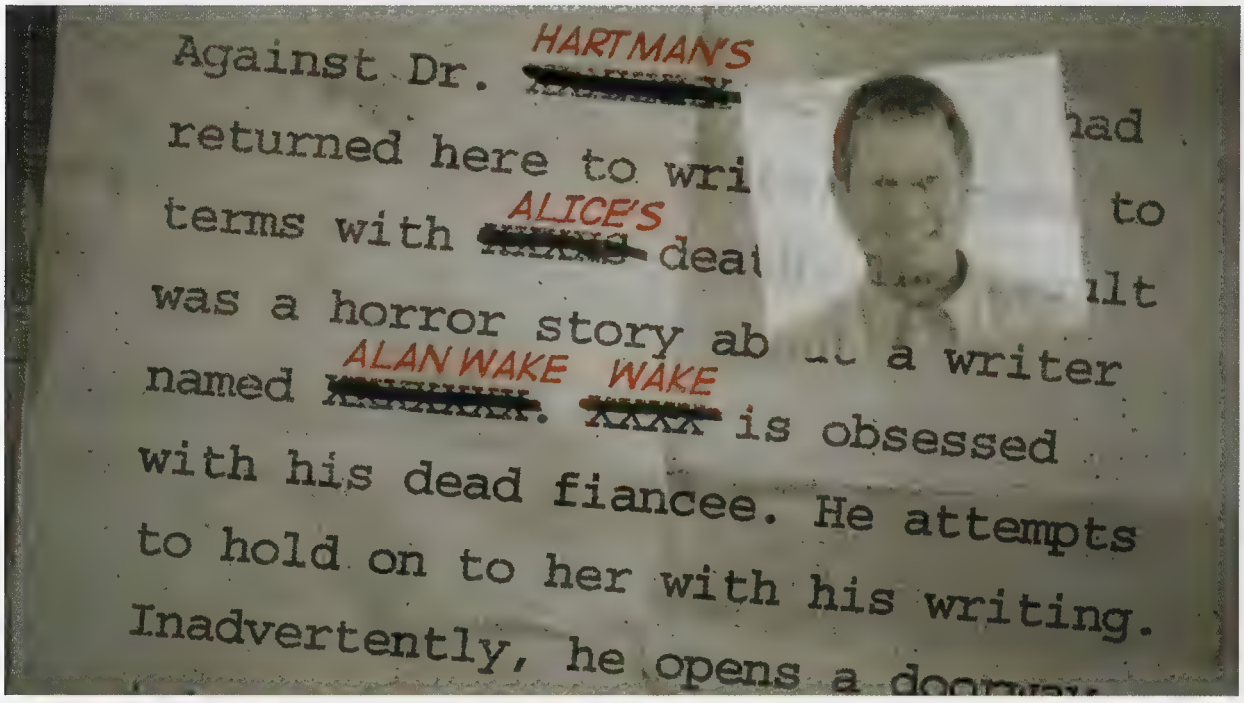

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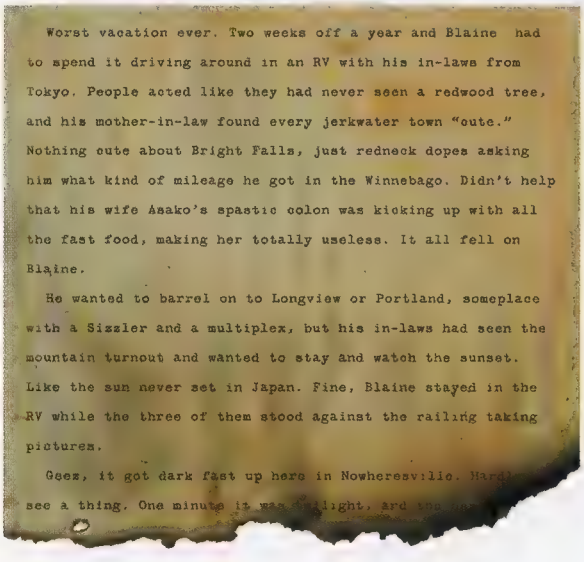




The pages from Wake's lost manuscript are crucially important to the story of *Alan Wake*. From the moment he finds the first page, everything about them is a mystery: Where did they come from? Are the events depicted in them really coming true? And if they are, how can that be? Did Wake really write them? And if he did, why doesn't he remember anything about it? They provided a constant motivation for Wake and his various antagonists.

They also enabled us to provide a deeper glimpse into our characters' backgrounds, to delve into the backstory of the town, and to explore events that take place around town when Wake isn't present. The player isn't required to read them in order to complete the game, but much of the story is told in these pages and they're a vital part of *Alan Wake*'s atmosphere. They were also a valuable reminder that Wake is a writer, and that his creative powers have a dark side.

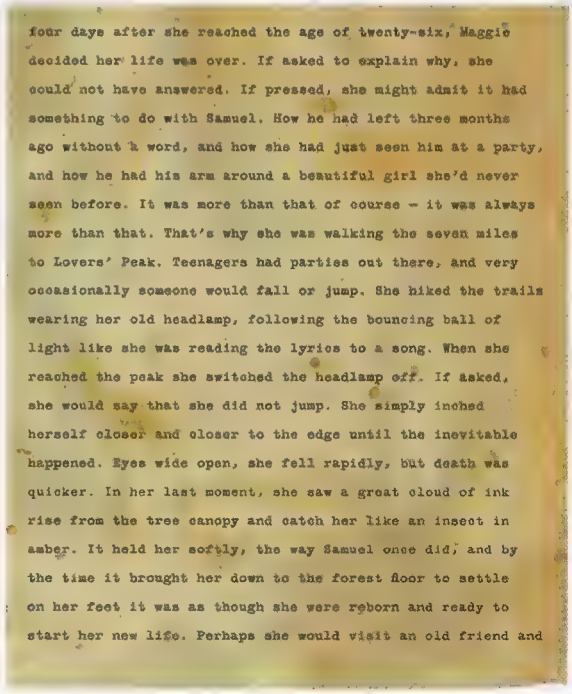




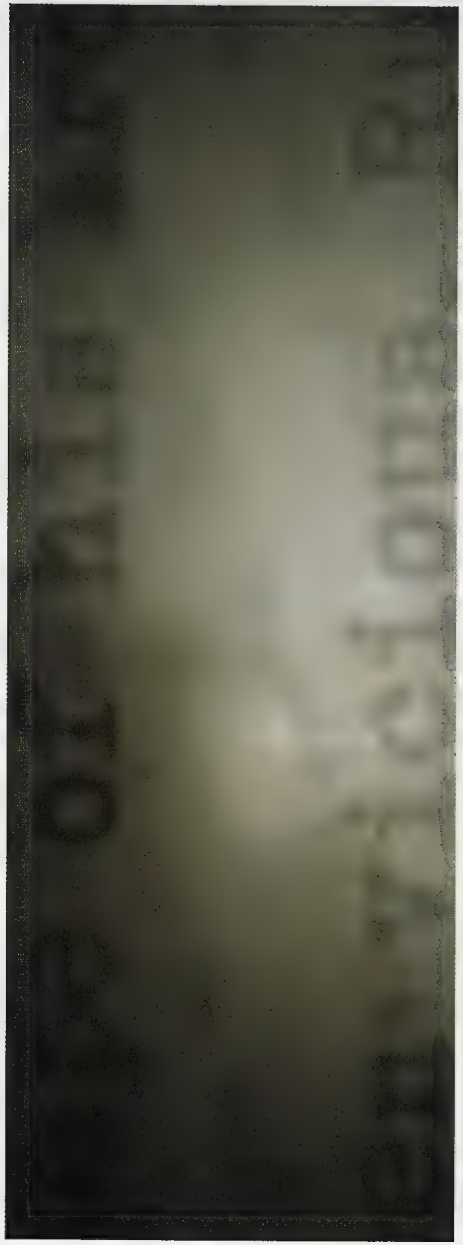
Worst vacation ever. Two weeks off a year and Blaine had to spend it driving around in an RV with his in-laws from Tokyo. People acted like they had never seen a redwood tree, and his mother-in-law found every jerkwater town "cute." Nothing cute about Bright Falls, just redneck dopes asking him what kind of mileage he got in the Winnebago. Didn't help that his wife Asako's spastic colon was kicking up with all the fast food, making her totally useless. It all fell on Blaine.

He wanted to barrel on to Longview or Portland, someplace with a Sizzler and a multiplex, but his in-laws had seen the mountain turnout and wanted to stay and watch the sunset. Like the sun never set in Japan. Fine, Blaine stayed in the RV while the three of them stood against the railing taking pictures.

Geez, it got dark fast up here in Nowheresville. Hard to see a thing. One minute it was daylight, and the

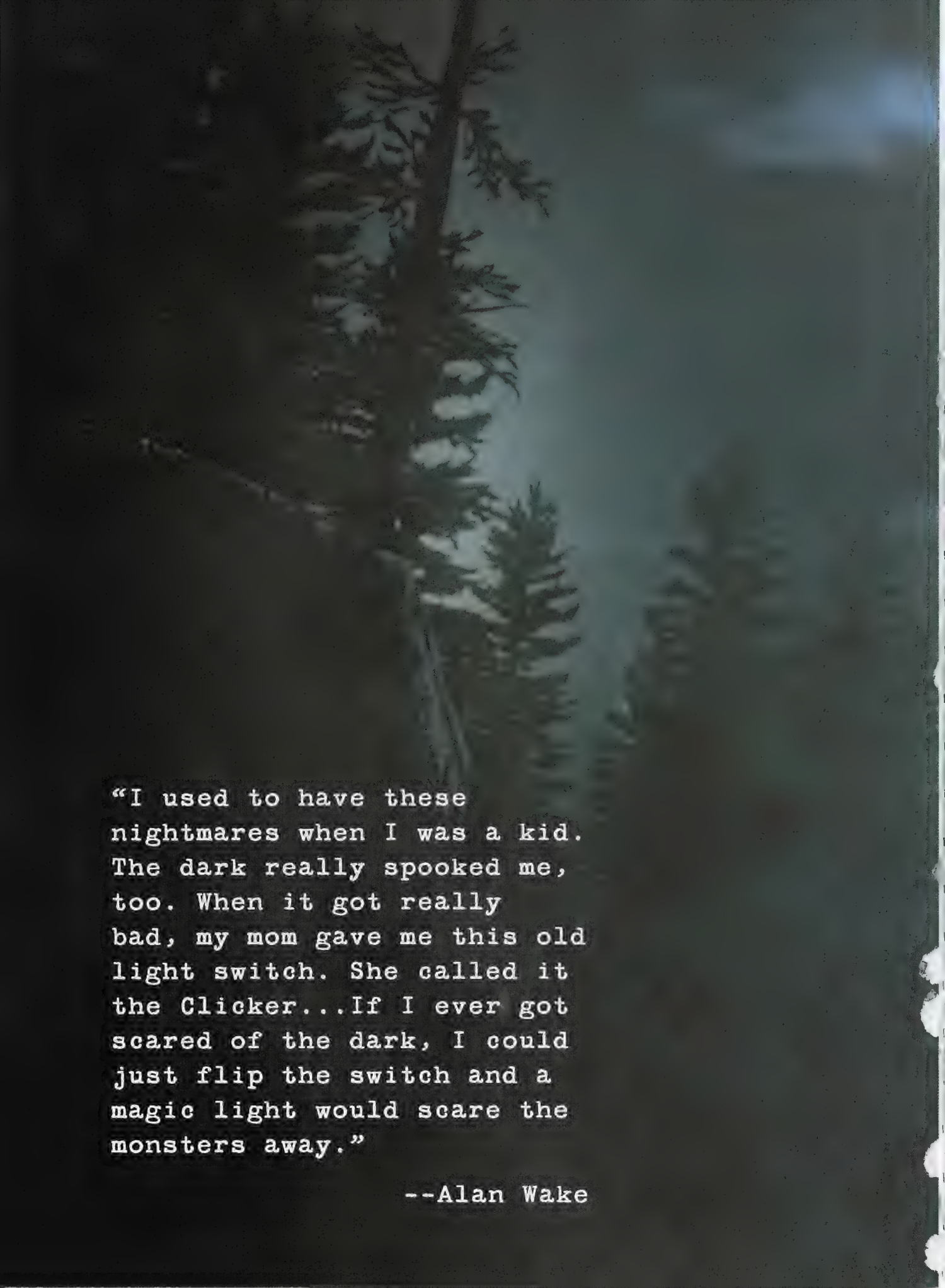


four days after she reached the age of twenty-six, Maggie decided her life was over. If asked to explain why, she could not have answered. If pressed, she might admit it had something to do with Samuel. How he had left three months ago without a word, and how she had just seen him at a party, and how he had his arm around a beautiful girl she'd never seen before. It was more than that of course – it was always more than that. That's why she was walking the seven miles to Lovers' Peak. Teenagers had parties out there, and very occasionally someone would fall or jump. She hiked the trails wearing her old headlamp, following the bouncing ball of light like she was reading the lyrics to a song. When she reached the peak she switched the headlamp off. If asked, she would say that she did not jump. She simply inched herself closer and closer to the edge until the inevitable happened. Eyes wide open, she fell rapidly, but death was quicker. In her last moment, she saw a great cloud of ink rise from the tree canopy and catch her like an insect in amber. It held her softly, the way Samuel once did, and by the time it brought her down to the forest floor to settle on her feet it was as though she were reborn and ready to start her new life. Perhaps she would visit an old friend and









"I used to have these nightmares when I was a kid. The dark really spooked me, too. When it got really bad, my mom gave me this old light switch. She called it the Clicker...If I ever got scared of the dark, I could just flip the switch and a magic light would scare the monsters away."

--Alan Wake



EPISODE TWO

TAKEN







The title cards shown here reinforced the TV show stylization of *Alan Wake* in which we divided the game into six episodes: essentially a "season" of a television show. We introduced each with a short title sequence that included a "Previously on Alan Wake" montage recapping the previous episode. This also helped us contextualize the New York flashback scenes, which offered greater insight into Alan's character and his relationship with Alice. Because Alice went missing so early in the game, we needed reinforce the idea that she was worth saving, and that this was a marriage worth fighting for. It also allowed us to reveal some of Alan's personal demons, Alice's fear of the dark, and to give additional background on story elements like the Clicker.



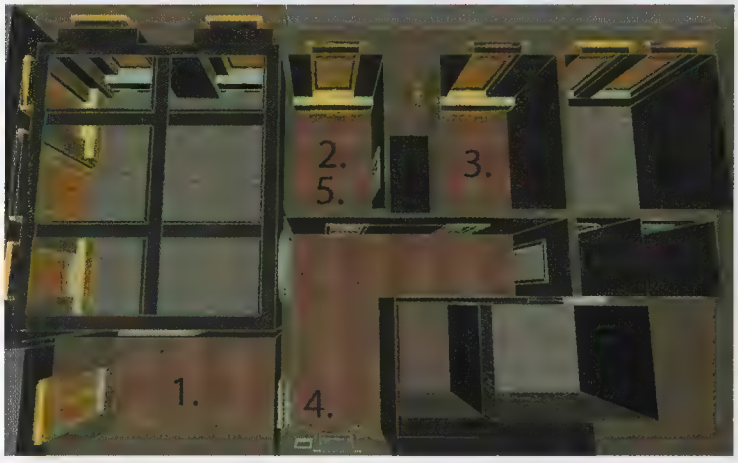
For Wake's New York apartment, we wanted to recreate the sophisticated and identifiable feel of an Upper East Side apartment with a view of Central Park, and we needed several rooms for the flow of the level. There were some initial difficulties in creating a large enough apartment with many rooms, windows, and easy navigation and sight lines between all the important points. The final layout allows the player to get an immediate sense of the entire apartment after walking in from the front door. For decoration, we made use of photographs we had ourselves taken in New York when shooting for material for the *Max Payne* series. These images were helpful in reinforcing the fact that Alice is a photographer and that our couple is originally from New York.








SHERIFF

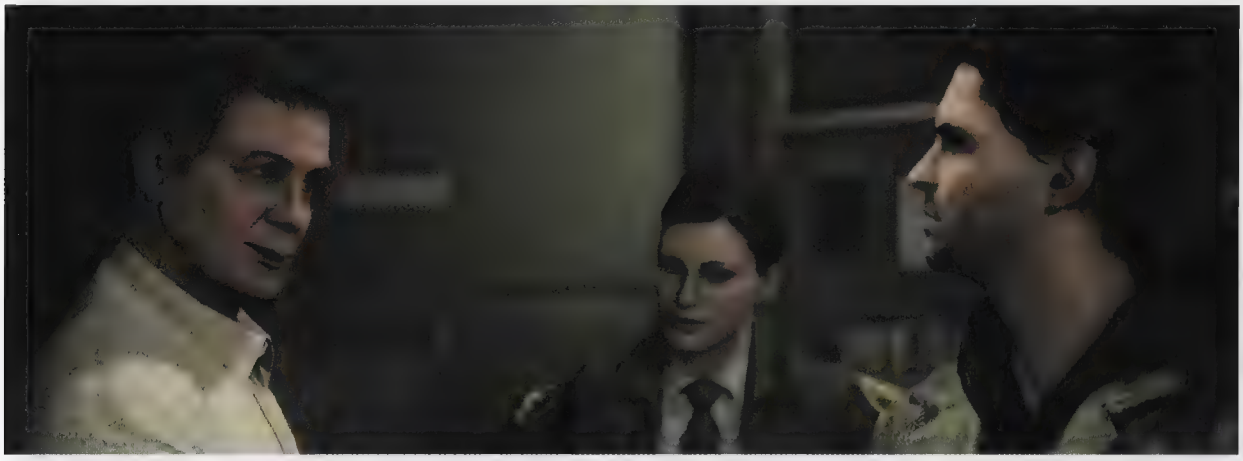

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The sheriff station survived the typical iteration cycle relatively unharmed. The original version lacked some character and had too many rooms for easy navigation and our story flow. Most of our work was devoted to streamlining both the interior and exterior architecture, as well as cutting down the number of player-usable rooms.

From a story perspective, it was important to contrast Alan's experience of having spent the previous night in Bird Leg Cabin, with the knowledge of the town residents that the island had sunk into the lake years before. The Sheriff station also provided the perfect location for introducing the kidnapping plotline. For Alan, the call answers his questions about Alice's whereabouts but raises the sense of jeopardy and the sense that he is being watched at all times. We were also able to introduce the idea that the manuscript pages were valuable not only to Alan, but to others as well, even if we don't completely understand why.













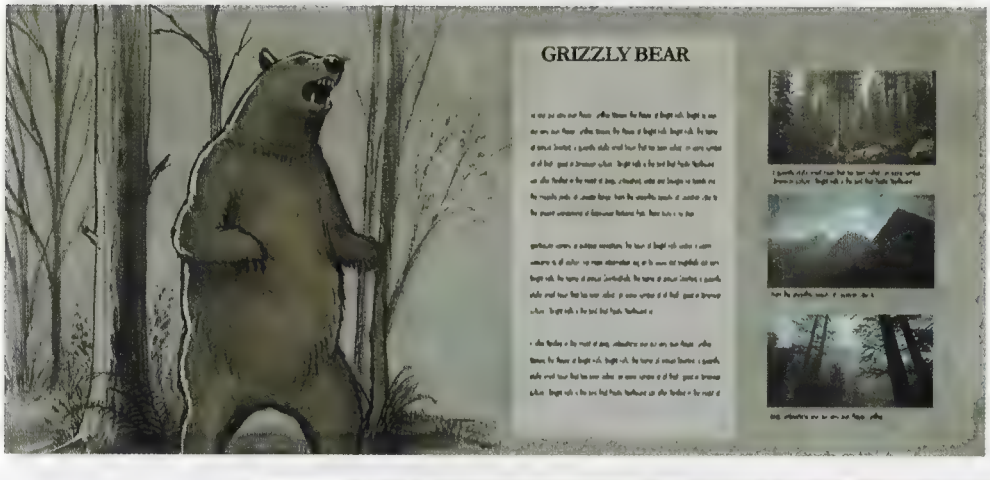
Elderwood was one of our oldest levels and was used internally as a vertical slice of sorts, to prove out how a mission might work, and what balance of traversal, combat encounters, voice over, manuscript pages, puzzles, and weapon resourcing worked best. We were also able to prototype various AI-assisted co-op modes, which eventually turned into the combat sequences with Mott, emphasizing the crucial importance of light by making it the player's only weapon.







The Elderwood Lodge was an important location for helping establish Bright Falls as a character in its own right, nestled within the national parks of the Pacific Northwest. We wanted the player to get a very real sense of place, but it also needed a slightly ominous feel. It was also very useful for showing the power of the Dark Presence. Here we have the daytime view, featuring old Bucktooth Charlie, and the nighttime view upon Alan's return.





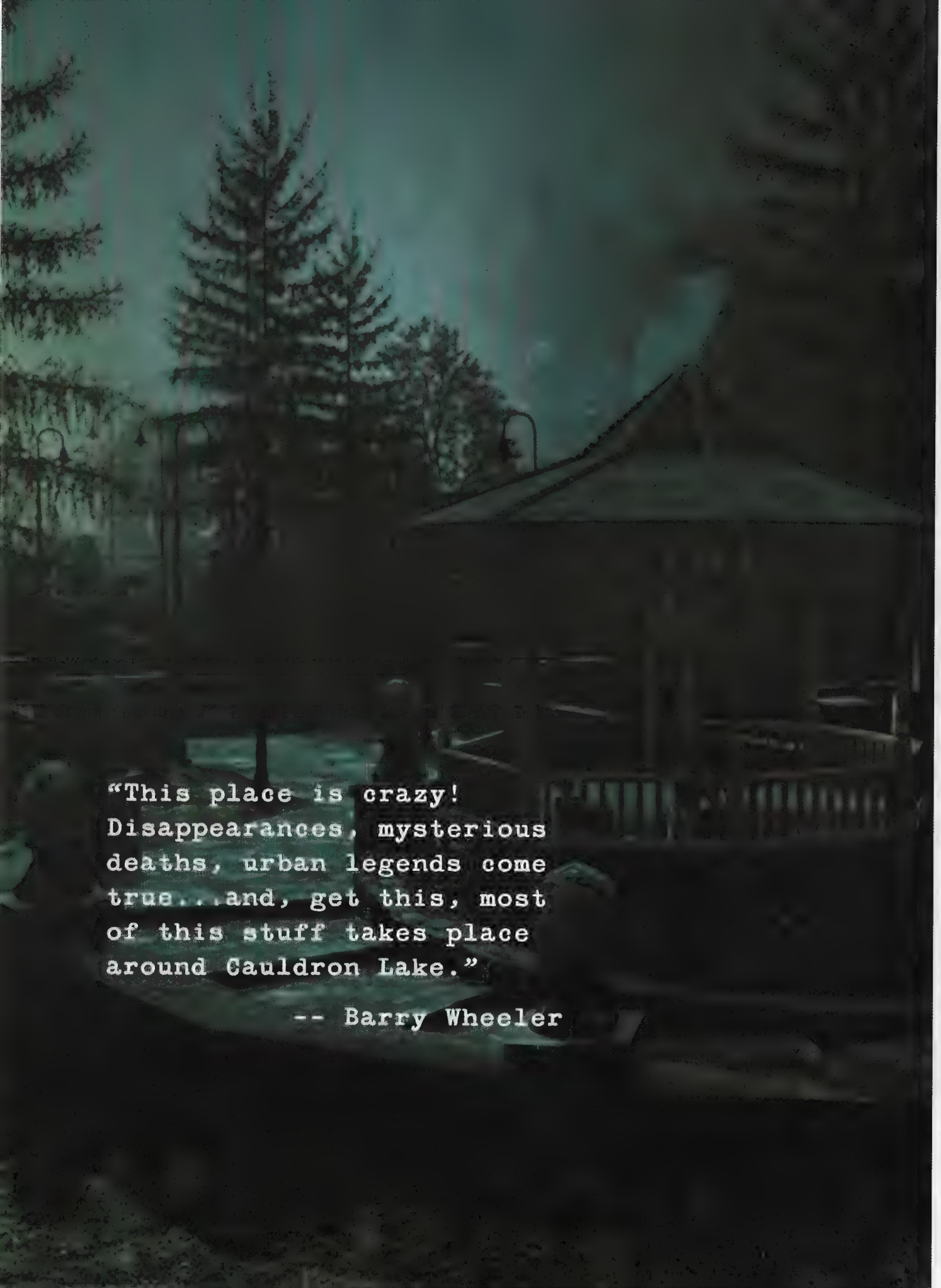


The encounter with Rusty was perhaps our bloodiest in the game, and was made more troubling for Alan given that Rusty is one of the first people he meets in town. After Rusty becomes a Taken, there is clearly no going back as the town begins its descent into chaos.



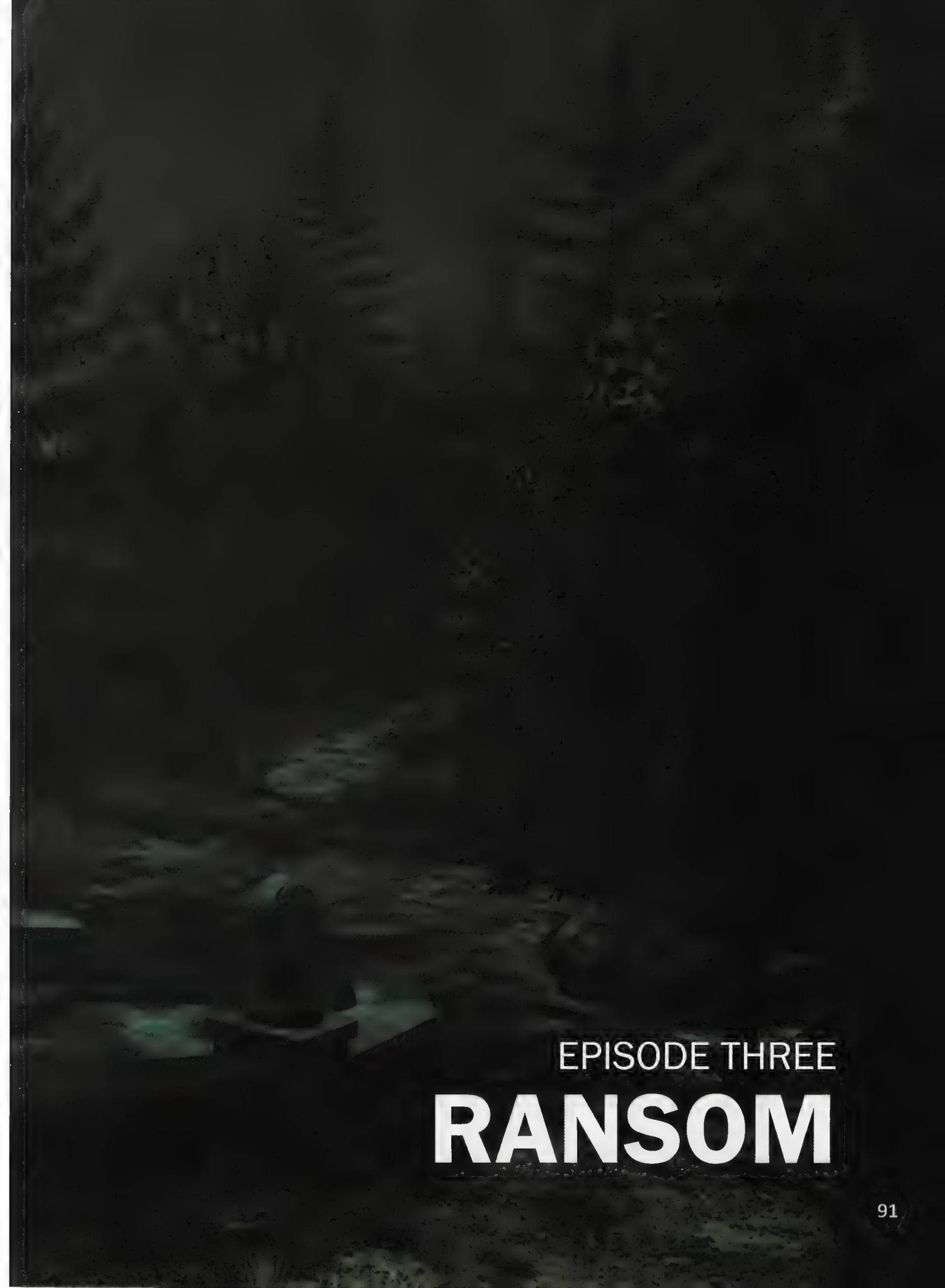






"This place is crazy! Disappearances, mysterious deaths, urban legends come true...and, get this, most of this stuff takes place around Cauldron Lake."

-- Barry Wheeler



EPISODE THREE

RANSOM

EPISODE 1: NIGHTMARE

The trailer park environment had originally been a more elaborate set that allowed the player to interact with residents in different trailers. This was eventually simplified for the sake of maintaining cinematic tension as Nightingale arrives on the scene and Alan is forced to flee on foot. The following pursuit by Nightingale and the deputies reinforces the idea that Alan is beset at all sides as he is pursued by supernatural and human antagonists alike.

The encounter with Rose was important in presenting the idea that while the Dark Presence could completely take over certain individuals and turn them into Taken, there were others whom it merely "touched" and could use to do its bidding.

We also used this scene to reinforce the idea that the manuscript pages were valuable and somehow held the key to what was happening in the town.












POLICE
POLICE



According to our fictional history, Bright Falls was born as a mining town. While there hasn't been any mining for decades, including this kind of historical detail is important to us. Not only does it support the rest of our fiction, it also creates a tangible sense of time and place.



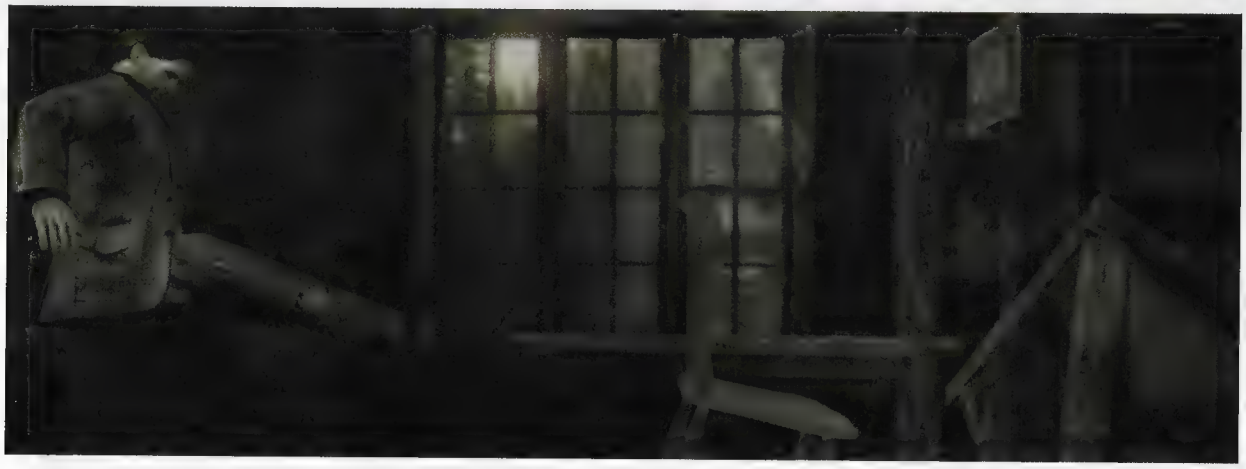
The coal mine site was one of our oldest environments and was on display in some of our earliest screenshots, but it was only much later in production before we knew exactly how we were going to use it. Like the logging site before it, it provided us with a desolate semi-industrial location where we could create more dynamic gameplay and experiment with a range of puzzles. As with many of the other built environments, however, we wanted a sense of age and decay so that floors could collapse under the player and doors would occasionally need to be kicked down to clear a passage.



When the story and main structure of the game were in place and all areas were playable, we began evaluating where we might incorporate additional gameplay variation. The coal mine, a classic videogame location, was the perfect setting for a more complex environmental puzzle requiring the player to use various levers and platforms in order to escape.





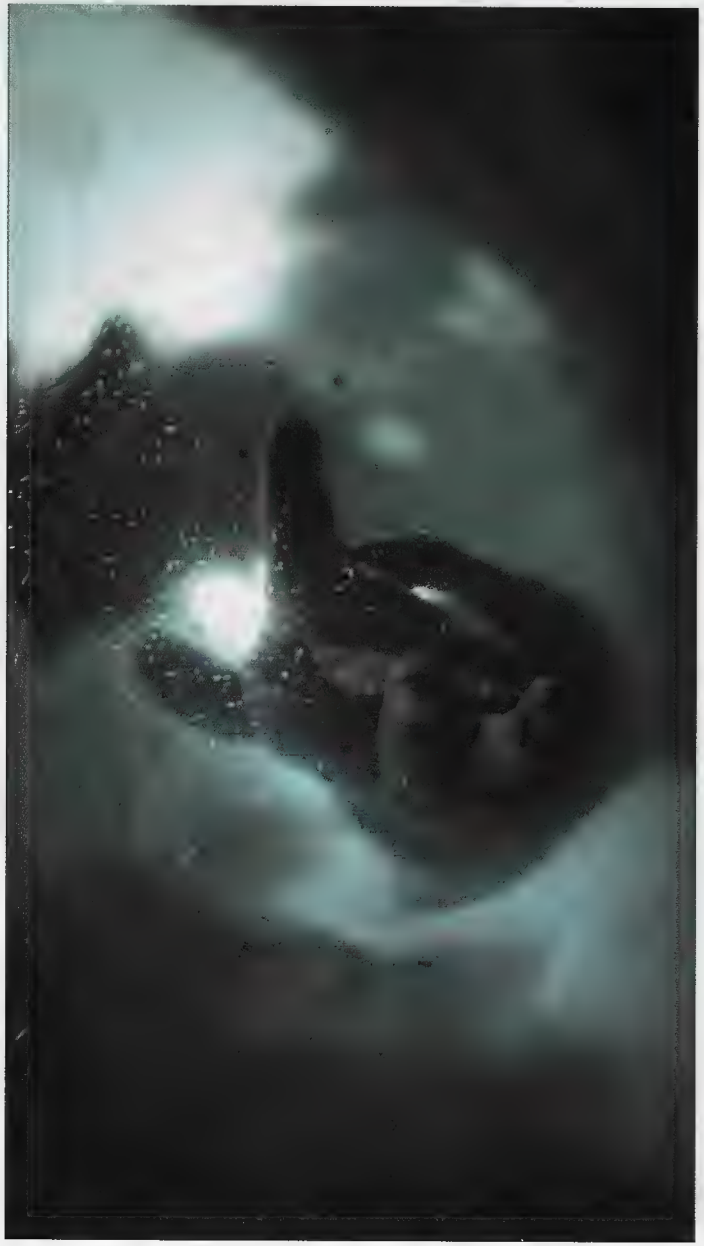






By the time Alan reaches the Mirror Peak lookout, the Dark Presence has dealt with Mott and it is clear to Alan that he never had Alice.

In keeping with the episodic nature of the game, however, Alan is also caught up in the attack, and we end here on a dramatic cliffhanger as Alan falls from Mirror Peak into Cauldron Lake below. As in many other key moments, light and dark are used here to cinematic effect.






"Unless we fight the
fantasy, it will return...
think about it: doesn't
this make far more
sense than the insane
supernatural conspiracy
you have concocted in your
mind? Everything can be
explained logically."
--Dr. Emil Hartman



EPISODE FOUR

THE TRUTH

The plot turns here from a kidnapping story into one of imprisonment as Alan finds himself under the care of Dr. Hartman at the Cauldron Lake Lodge. Alan's tour with Dr. Hartman shifts the pace of the story and allows him to meet the residents of the Lodge, such as Emerson and the Anderson Brothers, and to get a better sense of the good doctor's intentions. The balcony view also affords a spectacular view of the lake and surrounding forests.



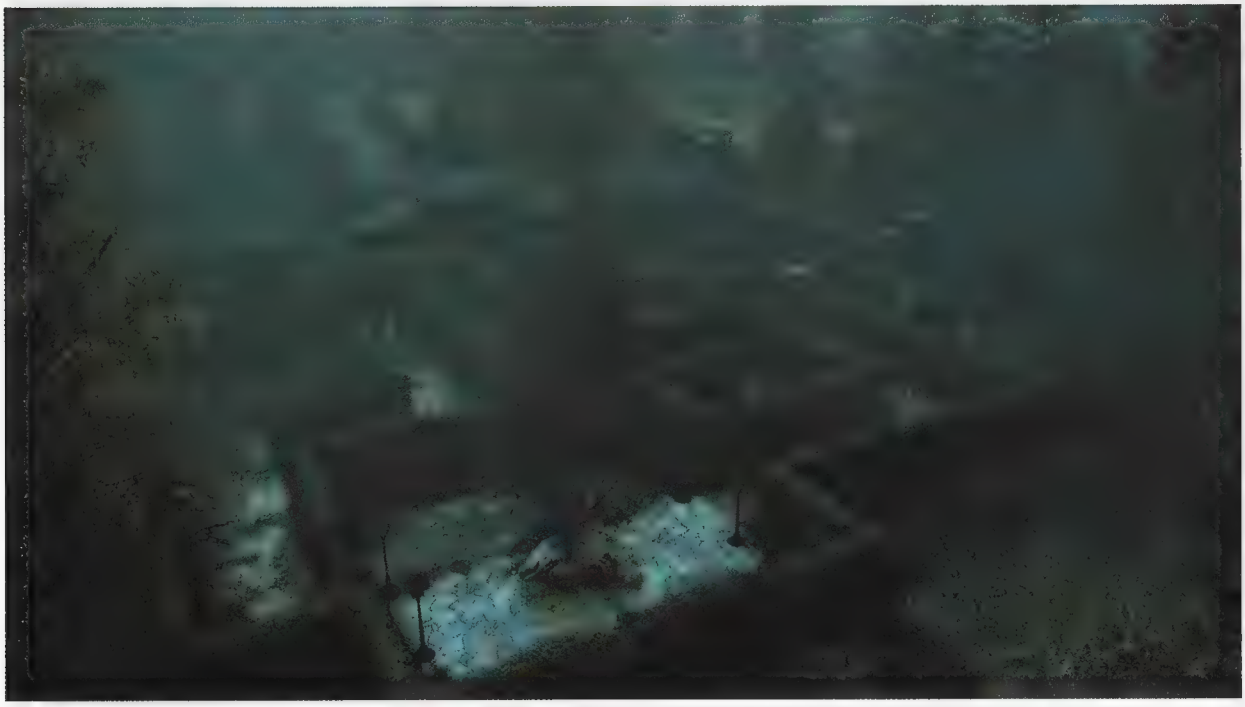




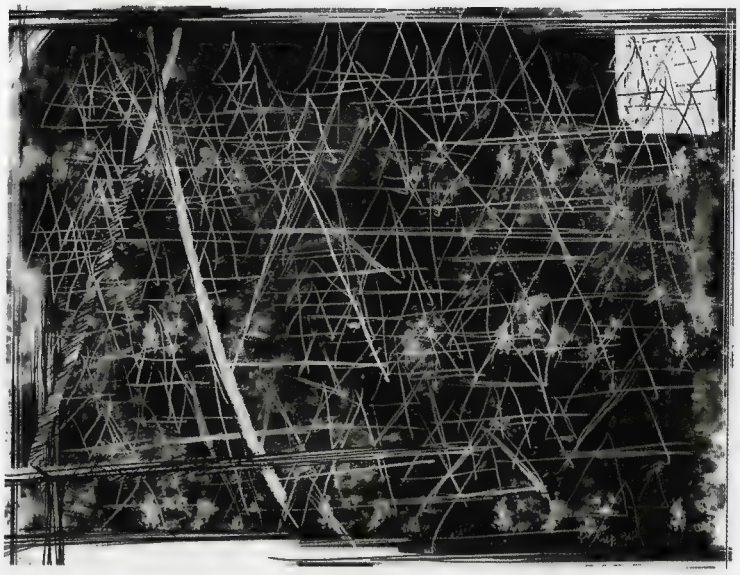


The nature of the Taken enemy type guided many of our design decisions when creating combat encounters, as there were only certain environments and times of day in which they would be plausible. Of course, it was important for us to show that Alan's daytime world is not an entirely safe place, as he learns all too clearly from his various human antagonists. So, as he has his friendly tour in the sunshine, he very much remains Hartman's prisoner.

The Lodge takes some of its inspiration from the Overlook Hotel in *The Shining*. We carried this through to the hedge maze, which was part of the lodge grounds from early in development. The first versions of the maze looked amazing and had extremely intricate layouts, but it soon became obvious that the maze had to be built with a very simple overall layout in order to accommodate the action. As Alan flees the lodge, we used a large assortment of poltergeist objects to obstruct, but then ultimately enable, his escape.

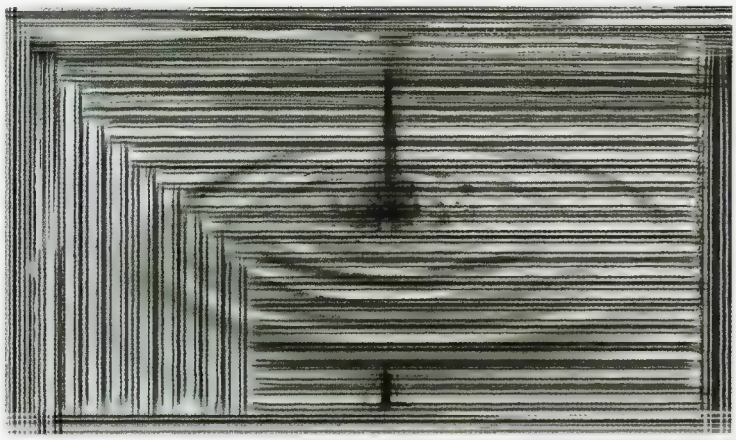


In keeping with the setting of the Cauldron Lake Lodge as a clinic specializing in the treatment of artists, we created various art pieces for the interiors. Some of these were early Taken concepts and original work inspired by the location, while others were developed for the *Creator's Dilemma* excerpt in *The Alan Wake Files*, and eventually found their way into the game.



Because the artists at the Lodge drew their inspiration from the deep waters of the lake, you'll notice recurring motifs throughout this work include spectral figures, ravens, and aquatic imagery.





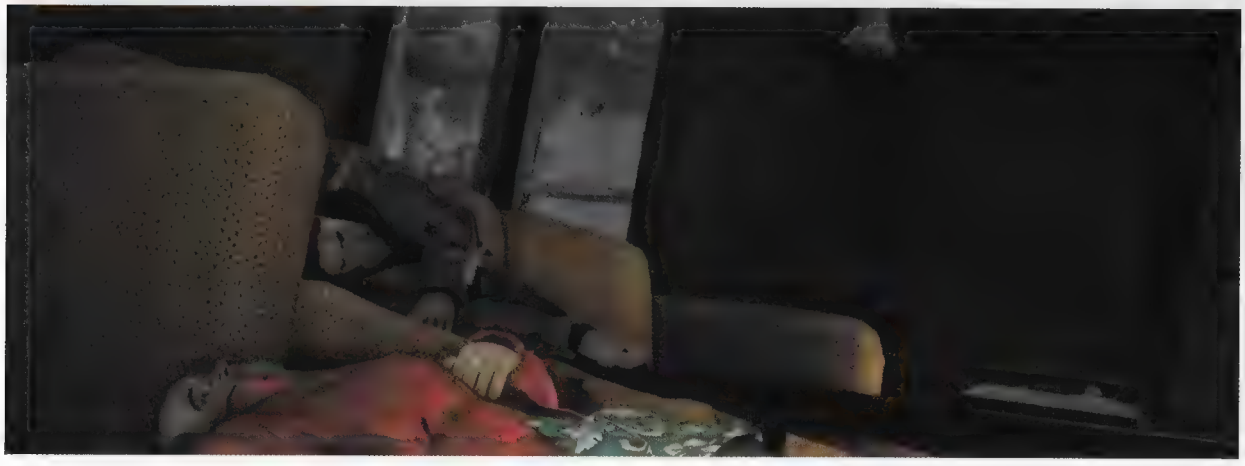
Because the artists at the Lodge drew their inspiration from the deep waters of the lake, you'll notice recurring motifs throughout this work include spectral figures, ravens, and aquatic imagery.






Grain silos
Cabbage field
Barn
Farm house
Garden
Apple trees
Play area
Greenhouse
Carrot field
Wheat field
Maintenance building
Windmill and well


ALAN
WAKE

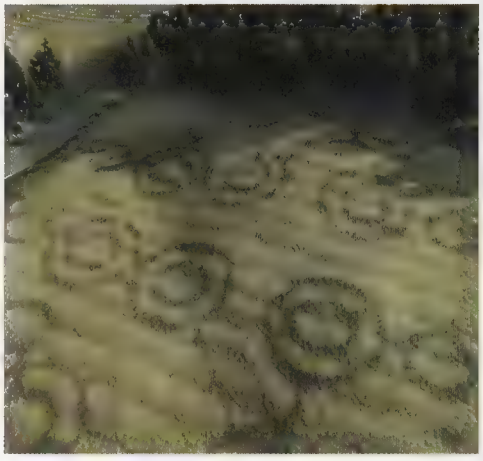


We designed the Anderson Farm to reflect the backstory of our aging rockers. Although clearly in a state of ruin, the Anderson Farm still has a lot of life left in it, from the Viking shields studding the front of the house and the longboat strung up in the barn to the enormous, dragon-crowned stage where Alan and Barry have their explosive metal battle with hordes of Taken.

Thanks to the Andersons' moonshine, Alan ventures on a sort of spirit quest back to the fateful night of Alice's disappearance. We wanted the player to be a ghostly observer, following the path of his former self. In earlier versions, we had Barry's cardboard standee come to life and Alan followed that back to the cabin, but we later abandoned this approach in favor of the more enigmatic and emotional vision in the current game.

In earlier versions of the story, we kept this knowledge from Alan and the player till much later in the game, but it was important for Alan to know what he was up against in order for him to understand that although Alice was under the lake, she could still be saved.

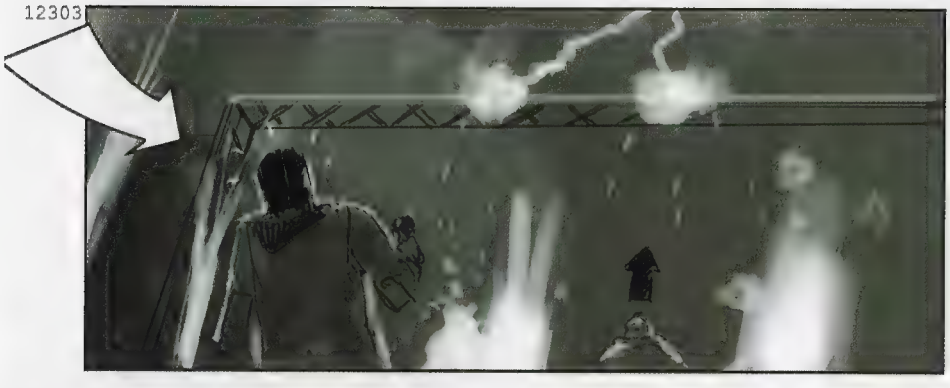






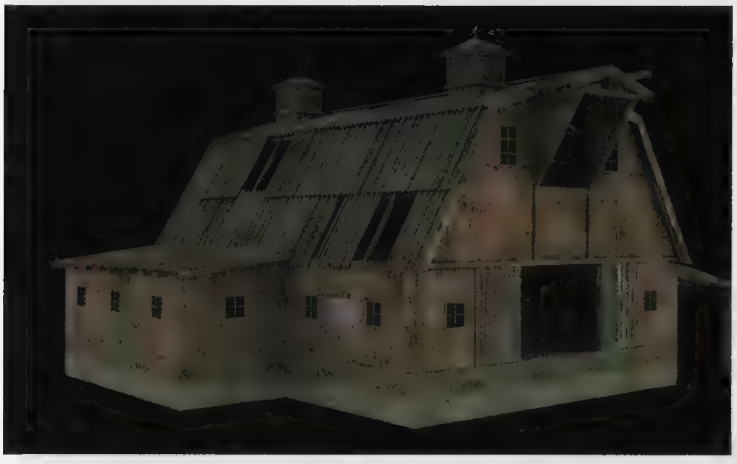
The stage fight sequence begins with a lightning strike that activates the music playback and the stage lights. In earlier versions of the story we suggested that Tor Anderson was indeed a God of Thunder so that when lightning struck Cauldron Lake Lodge and obliterated numerous Taken, it was Tor's doing. The Lodge escape changed in the course of production, but the original intention was to suggest that perhaps Tor also caused this lightning strike.



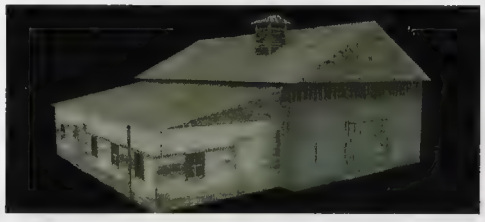


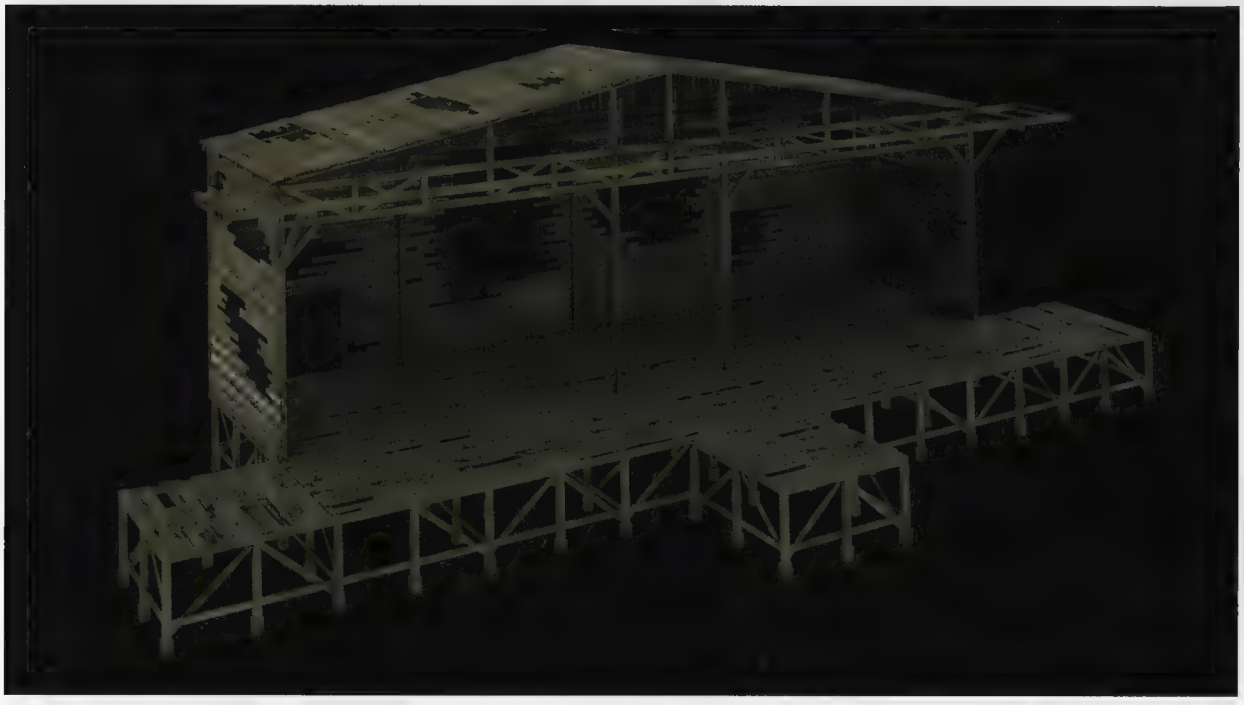


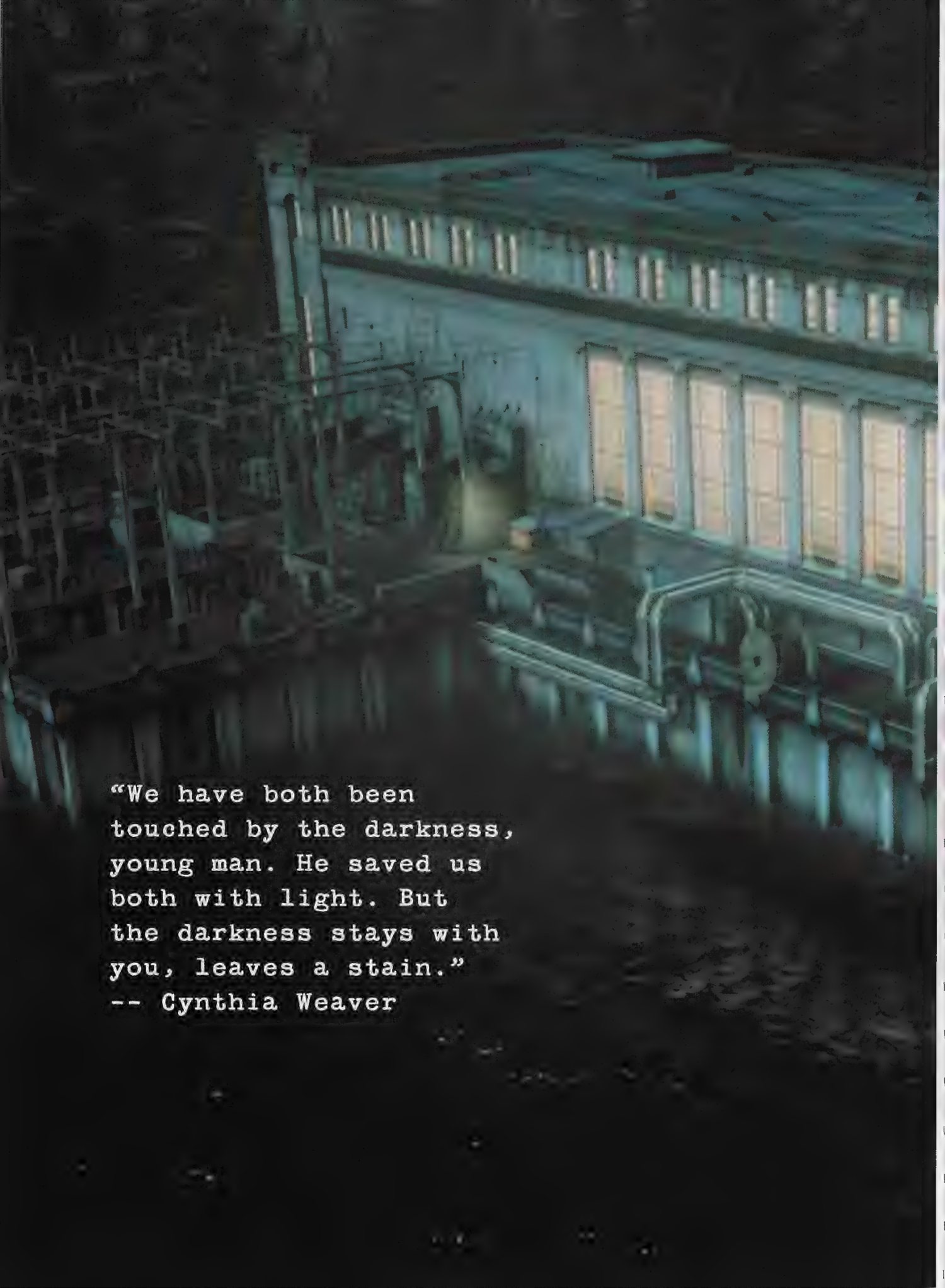




Designing the gameplay for the stage fight involved some interesting challenges. The biggest of these was ensuring that the player stayed in the vicinity of the stage for the duration of the song instead of escaping to the barn too early. We knew there had to be some sort of "gate" that is only opened after the song is over, but settling on how this would work required a bit of experimentation. After exploring ideas like possessed harvesters on the loose, the eventual solution of having a shed full of fireworks that explodes was a simple and appropriately spectacular finale to the song.






“We have both been
touched by the darkness,
young man. He saved us
both with light. But
the darkness stays with
you, leaves a stain.”
-- Cynthia Weaver



EPISODE FIVE

THE CLICKER





The power plant at the gorge river dam is one of our larger set pieces, and also the home of Cynthia Weaver. Again, we use the power plant like a beacon in the night, a way out of the dark forest, but also as a means of exploring our characters.

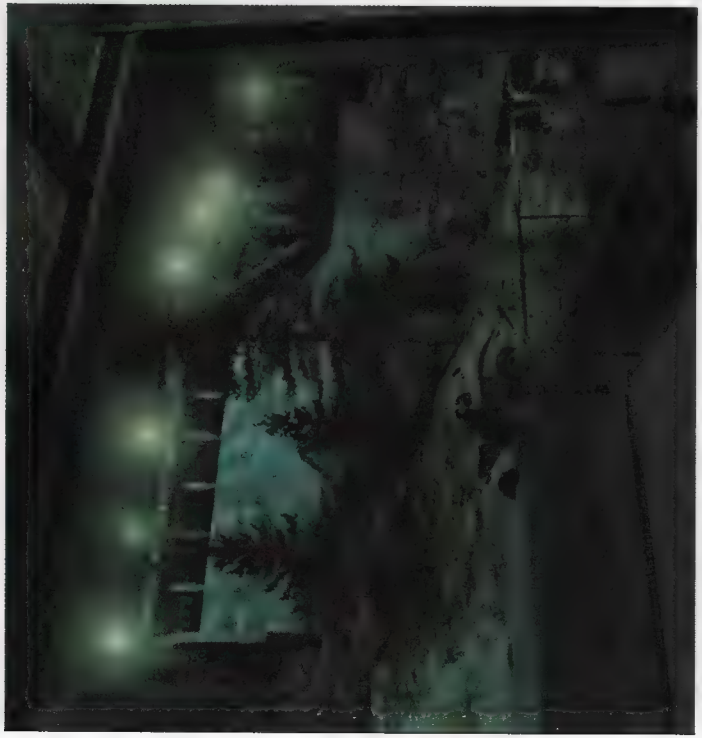
Because Cynthia has a long history with the Dark Presence, the amount of glow writing on rocks and walls increases as you approach the power station. When the door finally opens up, immensely powerful lights shine through, revealing what has kept Cynthia safe all these years: obsession.

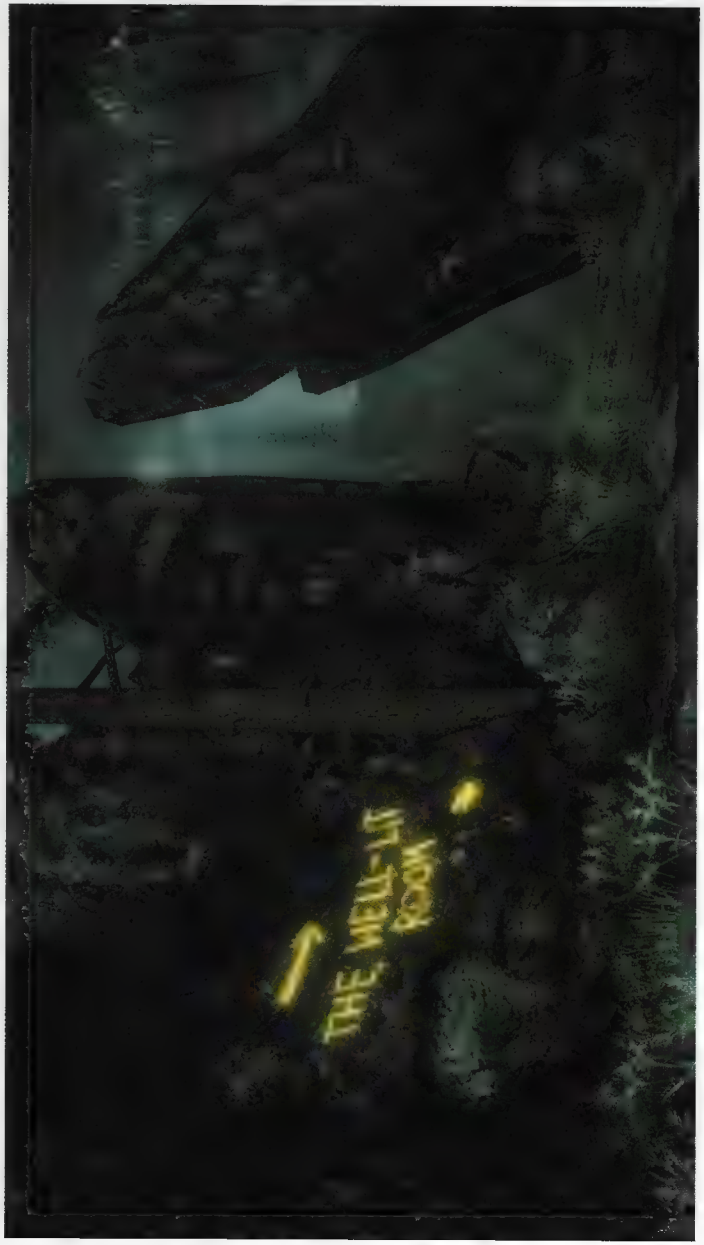











THE WELL-LIT
ROOM

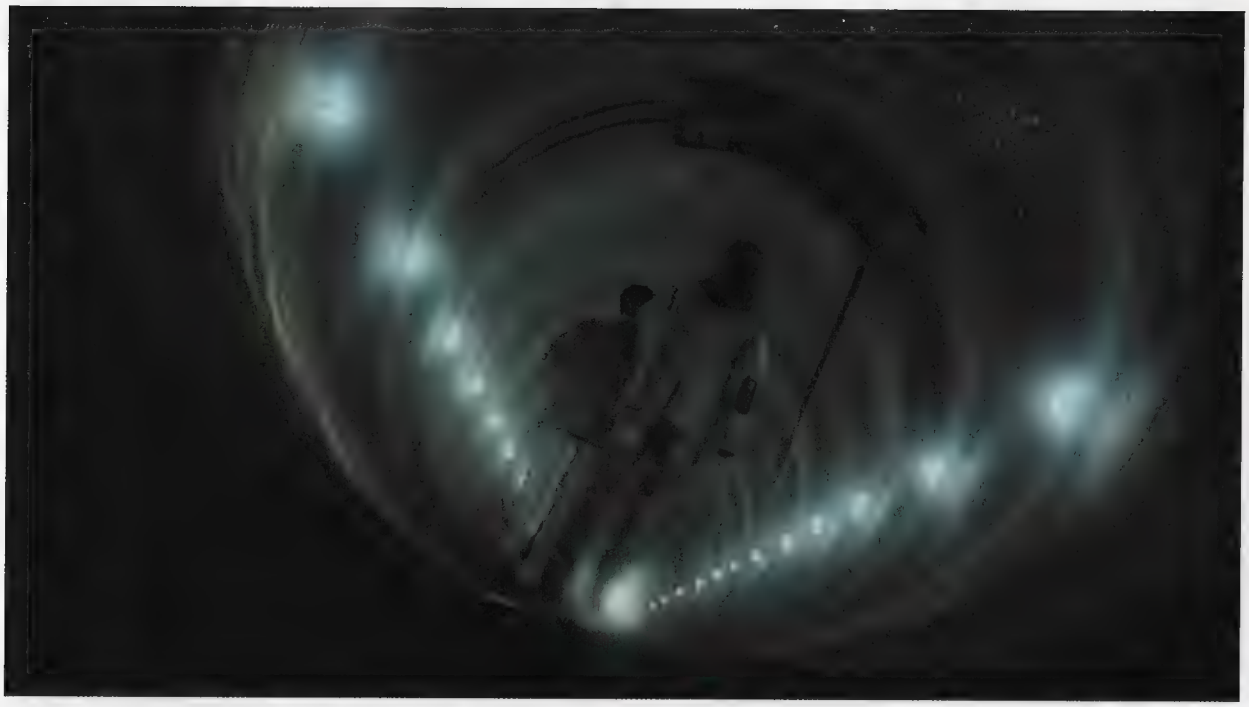


Inside, the strung lights and writing on the walls all paint a picture of a life spent protecting the Well-Lit Room, a strange chamber in the middle of the hydroelectric dam housing the shoebox of one Thomas Zane.







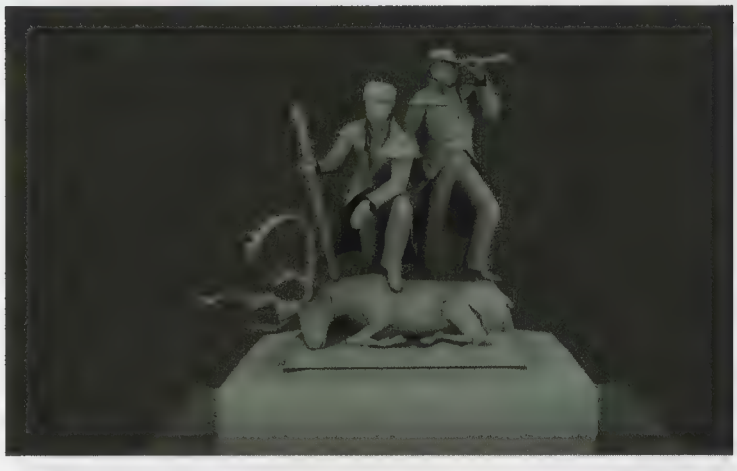


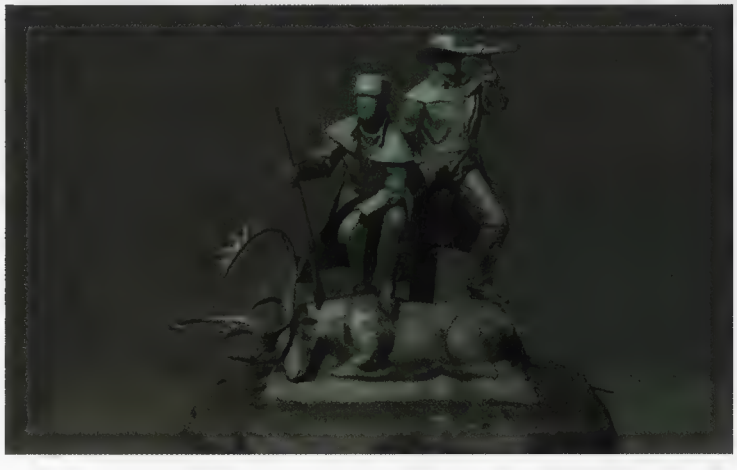
Even though this scene in the Well-Lit Room gives Wake the weapon he needs to fight the Dark Presence, it raises more questions than it answers, particularly about the nature of creative works in the Cauldron Lake area. Most notably: Who is the writer and who is merely a character in someone else's work? Whatever the case may be, this is one of the most mystical scenes in Alan Wake. Despite the clearly supernatural experiences Wake has had up until this point, the game strives to present itself in fairly realistic terms. The goal here, however, was to make the Well-Lit Room a magical place, something dreamlike and mythical.





Bright Falls posed a huge challenge for designing the gameplay route across the town. Bright Falls was built to be a "real" place in the game world and as such it posed a huge design challenge when it came to shaping an enjoyable route. Luckily, Deerfest was just around the corner, so we could plausibly use the festival decorations to close off streets. After the attack on the sheriff's station, we designed an extended AI-assisted combat sequence through the town with Barry and Breaker. While it is a very different game, we won't deny the influence of *Left 4 Dead* on this mission, particularly in the rooftop traversal and culminating defense of the helicopter. Interestingly, the fire station was the last building to be added the town, the forested hills above the town being empty before we settled on the location for the helicopter.







Throughout the game, we tried to emphasize two aspects to Bright Falls. The Deerfest float is no exception. Seen here in daytime and nighttime views, the parade float is transformed from a banal, almost kitschy piece of small town boosterism into a ominous reminder that things are not what they seem in Bright Falls.








“It has no heart. It’s filled with darkness. You must fill its heart with light.”
-- Thomas Zane



EPISODE SIX

DEPARTURE

The move away from an open world game meant that some environments would never be used, or would be reserved for future games. Others, like the Majestic Motel, allowed us to fill in more of our backstory. This little dive was where out-of-towners like Special Agent Nightingale and Clay Steward stayed during their time in Bright Falls.





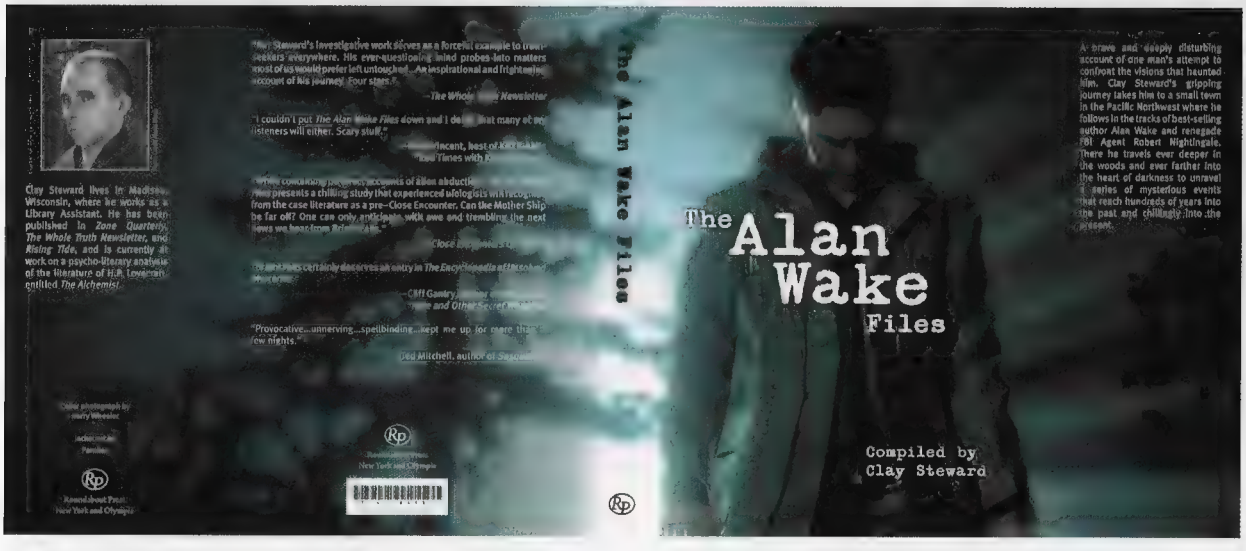

MOTEL


THE
Majestic
MOTELL

The hotel is located just off the road as Alan heads toward his final confrontation and is intended purely as optional exploration content. Nightingale's bottle of booze is evident on the table, as are surveillance photographs of town residents. Keen observers will also notice the slightly ajar wall vent containing the notes that would later form the basis of Clay Steward's *The Alan Wake Files*.







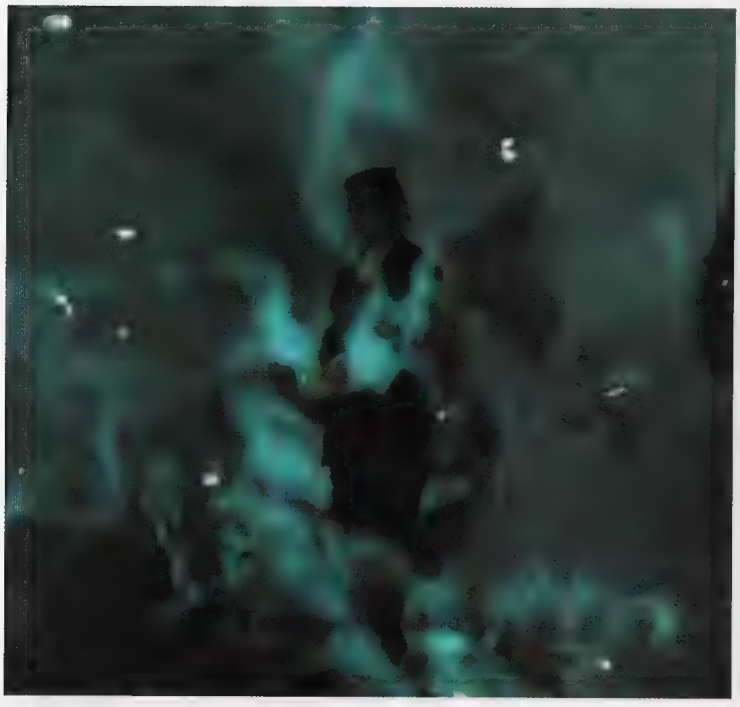
As Alan pushes toward his final confrontation with the Dark Presence, the action intensifies as he makes his way through ghost towns filled with Taken and poltergeist objects.







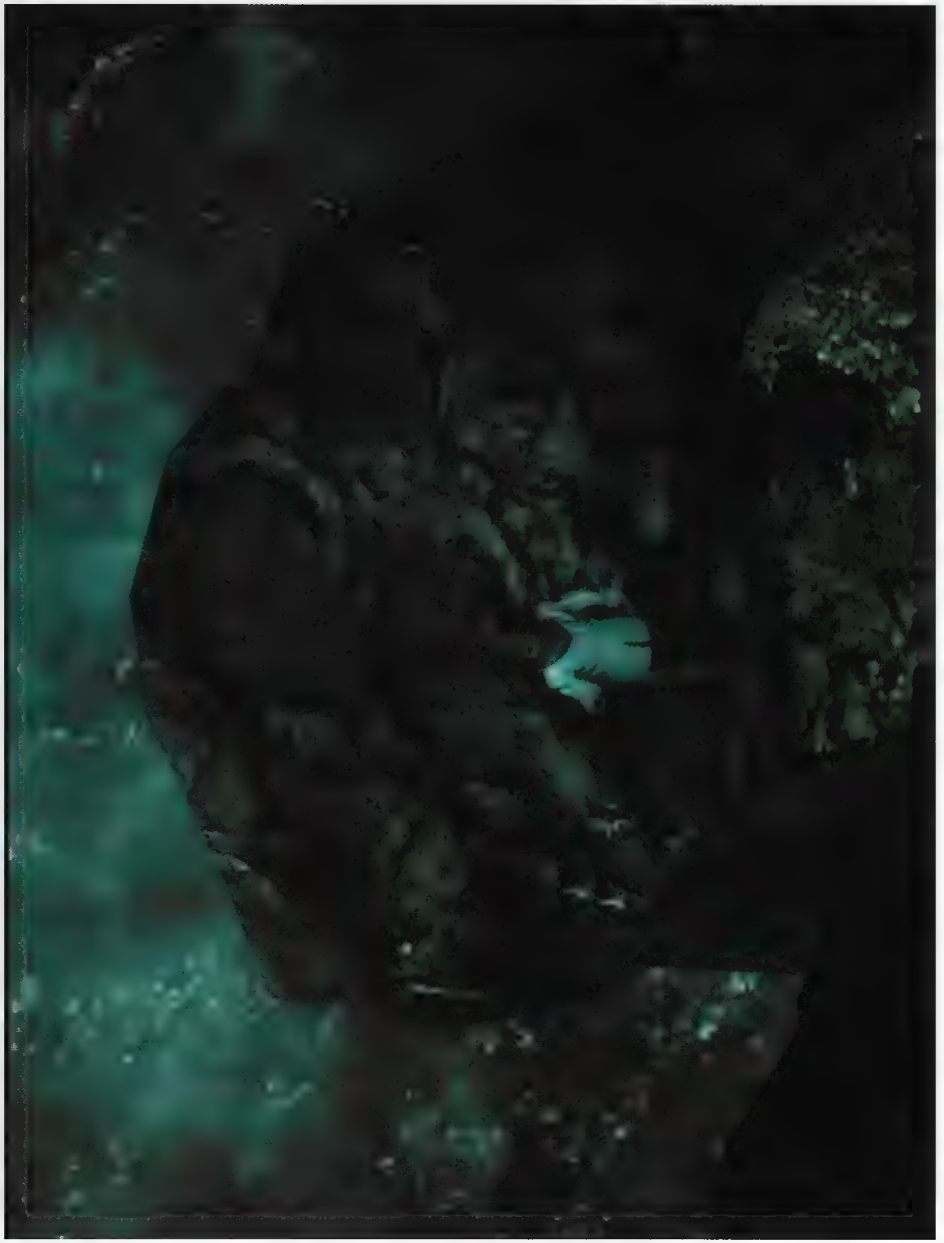
Wake's final confrontation with the Dark Presence was split into two major encounters. The first encounter emphasizes gameplay, occurring at the edge of Cauldron Lake, where Alan must defeat a tornado of vehicles using his flaregun. It's perhaps not a very traditional video game boss fight, but that was very much intentional. The idea was to provide the player with an impressive experience, something that shows off the size and power of the Dark Presence. Numerous experiments with the difficulty level and the complexity of the fight showed that the scene worked best when it was kept fairly simple and quick: otherwise it became simply boring or frustrating, and that robbed the moment of its gravitas.



















The second encounter, with Barbara Jagger under the lake, focused more on Alan's rescue of Alice and the resolution of the story and is consequently played out as a cinematic.

Although Barbara Jagger had always been part of the vision for Alan Wake, earlier versions of the Dark Presence resembled something closer to the smoke monster from the television show *Lost*. When we developed the notion of poltergeist objects, the Dark Presence evolved into a more invisible force that could manipulate the physical world to its own ends.

We were more satisfied with this solution as it didn't emphasize traditional, corporeal creature design so much as an environment in which everything could be turned against you: townspeople, cars, barrels, whatever.

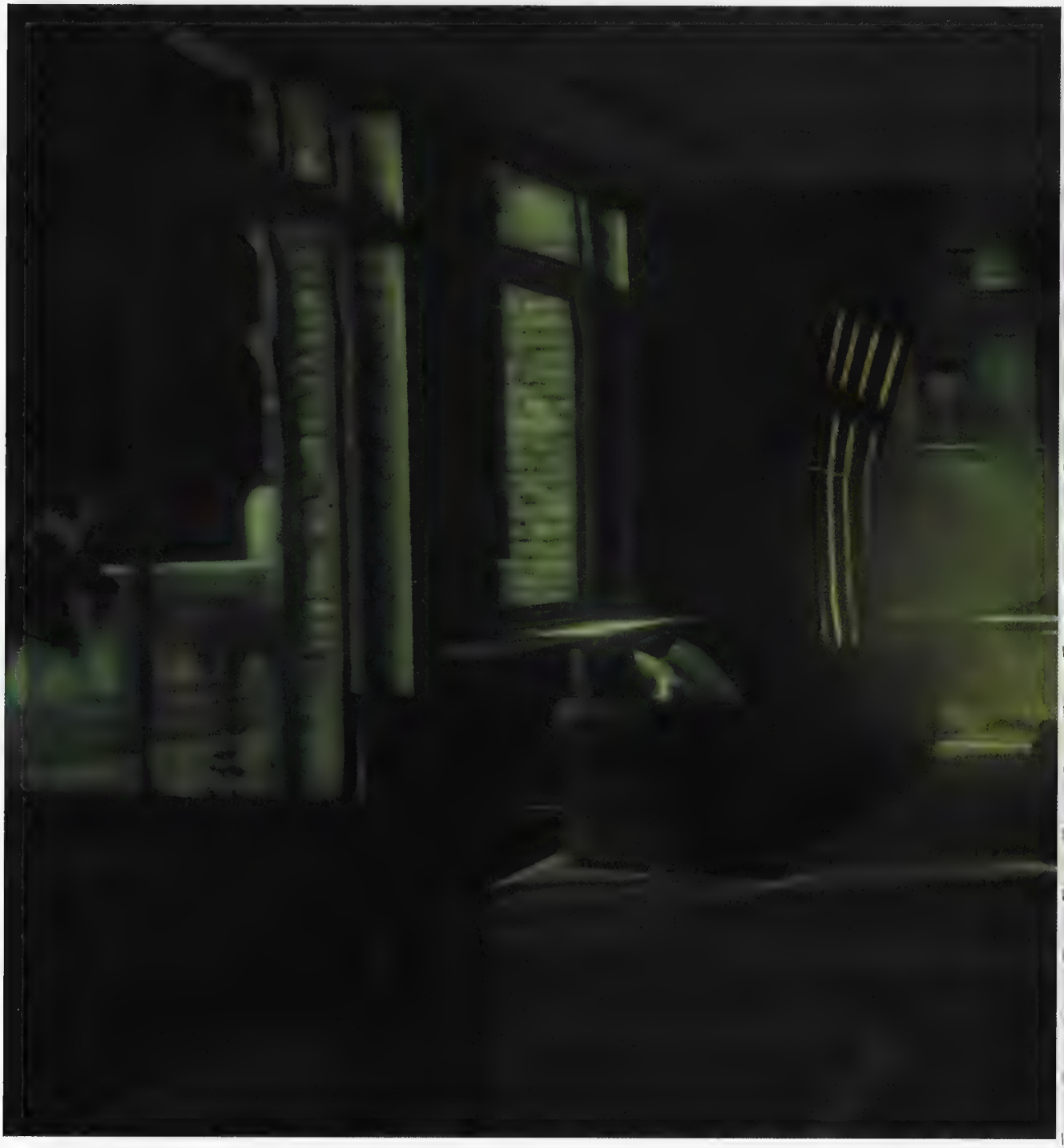




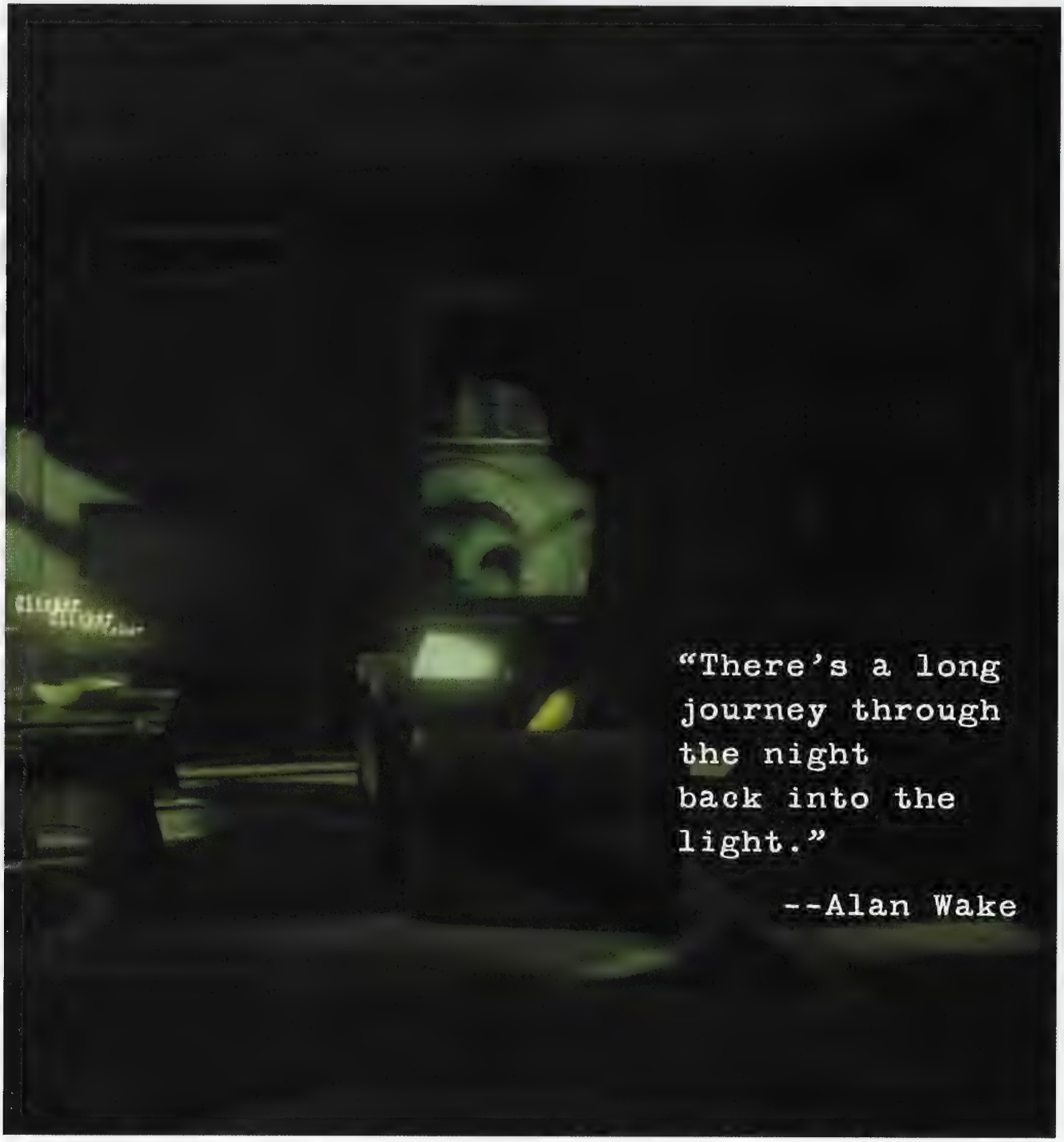
Defining the feel of the Dark Place was a challenge for us. Just how do you create an alternate dimension under a lake, this place that is the source of the Dark Presence and all the associated strangeness, without diminishing the sense of mystery and the unknown that gives it that narrative power?

Because the Dark Place uses the imaginations of those within it to fabricate a reality specific to them, we thought that Alan's version of the Dark Place would be a landscape littered with ideas rather than objects.

We had some experience in creating levels that explored the mental states of our protagonists, most famously the bloodline maze level in the original *Max Payne* in which the player had to walk a tightrope of blood through a dark world while Max's child cried in the distance.







"There's a long journey through the night back into the light."

--Alan Wake

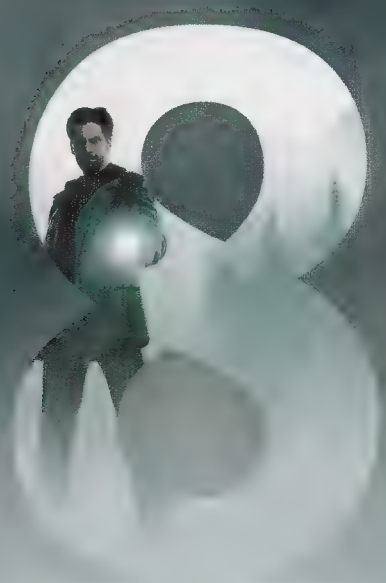
In *Alan Wake*, our hero finds himself in a warped version of his New York apartment. Dark clouds ripple outside the windows, and we gave the place a very aquatic feel using the greenish tones, shimmering objects, and floating particles.

As with the crying baby in the *Max Payne* blood-maze level, we used the tapping of typewriter keys to subtly pull the player in the direction of the cabin. The intention was to create a place in which all the natural laws of the normal world were suspended and where you couldn't really tell the difference between what was real and what was dream.

The Dark Place also allowed us to extend our light mechanic in a more conceptual direction, so that Alan essentially had to convert words into objects in order to find his way back to the cabin. As writers do, he brings the world into being using words.




Its First Week



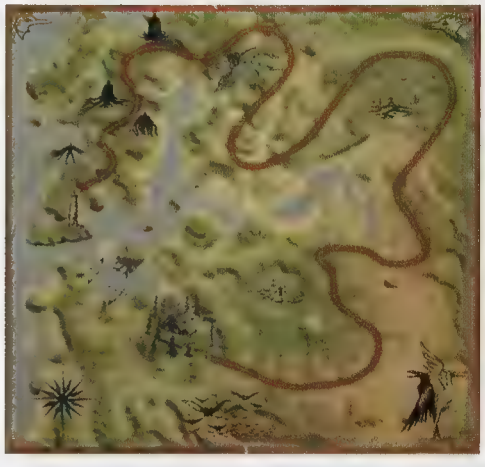
UNUSED MATERIAL

As with any good movie, we had to leave many things on the cutting room floor. The extended experimentation phase of *Alan Wake* meant that we had to cut a great many ideas – and sometimes even entire missions – that ultimately did not fit into the final story. We thought it would be interesting to show some of these ideas, environments, and prototype missions to provide an idea of things that could have been part of the final *Alan Wake* experience.

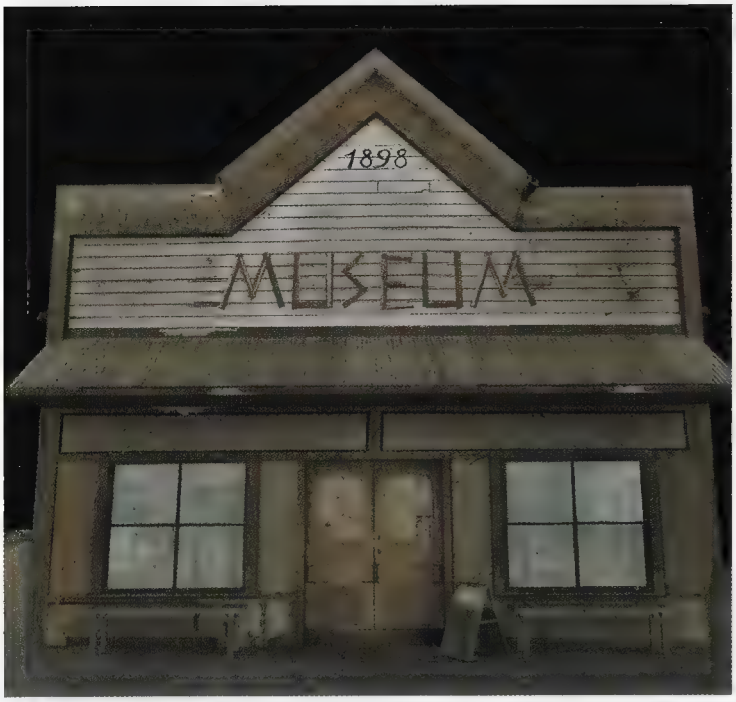


BALL MAZE

One of the small and cute ideas we had was to use a Ball Maze prop that depicted the region around Bright Falls as a play surface. It was considered, for a while, to be a fully usable mini-game with working physics. The object is actually still used as a prop in the game. See if you can find it.



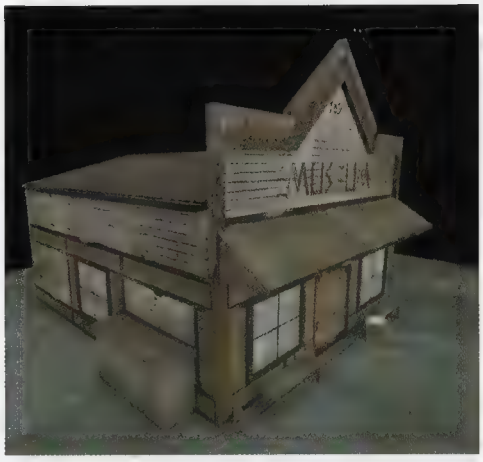




MUSEUM

As the game and the story evolved, even some of the high-detail buildings we created for the town of Bright Falls did not have a role in the world anymore. One of these was the Museum of Bright Falls, which played a role early on, but was from the game. We were instead able to provide background and history on the town using historical markers in places like the Elderwood Lodge and the Coal Mine.















BEARS AND WOLVES

Early on, we had planned to have large animals like bears and wolves possessed by the Dark Presence. We built the models, had some preliminary animations and actually tested a pack of wolves in our mission tests to see if our pathfind system could have a large number of wolves. The tests were fairly successful, but we eventually decided against the inclusion of these creatures as it would have been a very sizable amount of work to get them to a sufficiently high quality.





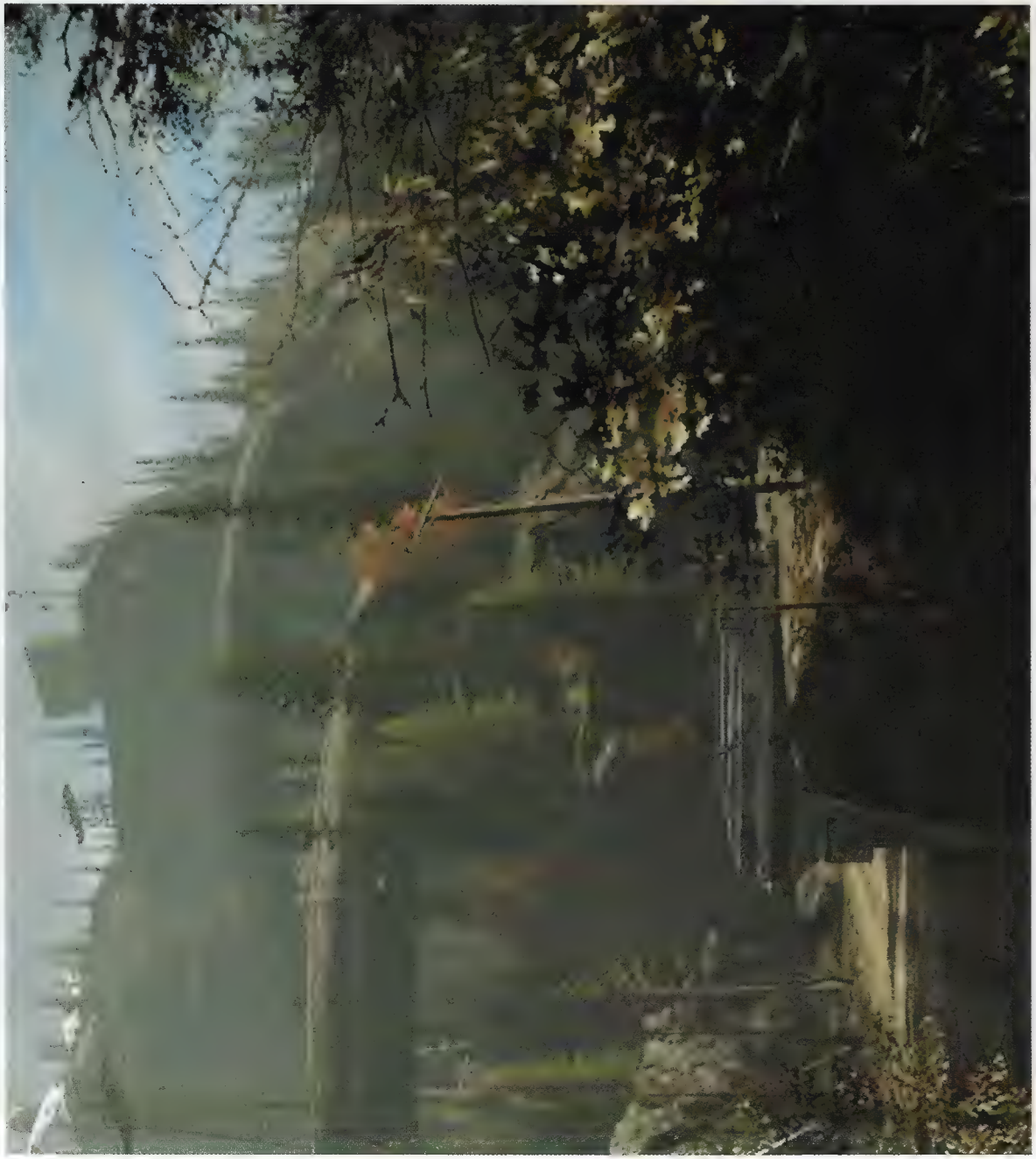
EARLY TOWN APPROACH

As you can see in these images, we created early versions of a small Northwestern town that were quite different from the version of Bright Falls you find in the final game.



PARTICLE ACCELERATOR

This huge construct is the Particle Accelerator, which was an important part of an early story treatment. It was conceived as part of a playable level set in and around the Moorcock Institute, which was a lab involved in reality-altering physics experiments. It was a fun and impressive-looking location, but for the purposes of the story, it was problematic. Its very existence suggested strong science fiction themes that didn't feel right for *Alan Wake*, and it was eventually abandoned. While our story went in a different direction, the Moorcock Institute did make its way into the *Night Springs* episode, "A Quantum Suicide," in which Dr. Barclay Colvin gives a practical demonstration of the many-worlds interpretation using a handgun.







SAW MILL

One of the areas we experimented with in 2007 was a saw mill environment. During this mission, Wake fought a Taken version of Agent Nightingale, which constituted a boss monster fight. As the game evolved, we abandoned the concept of Nightingale becoming a Taken, at which point this aspect of the story, and with it the environment, was cut. We did, however, repurpose many elements created for this set in other locations.





DREAM STAGE

We also pursued many concepts that dealt with locations that only existed in Wake's dreams. In this case, the dream stage was an environment in which spectators – much like in a theater – would have been able to observe scenes from Wake's imagination. We abandoned this concept and instead used Wake's internal monologue, flashbacks, and television shows more extensively. In particular, the "Writer in the Cabin" episodes provided a similar setting in which Wake's dreamlike memories of his missing week are played back on television sets around the town.





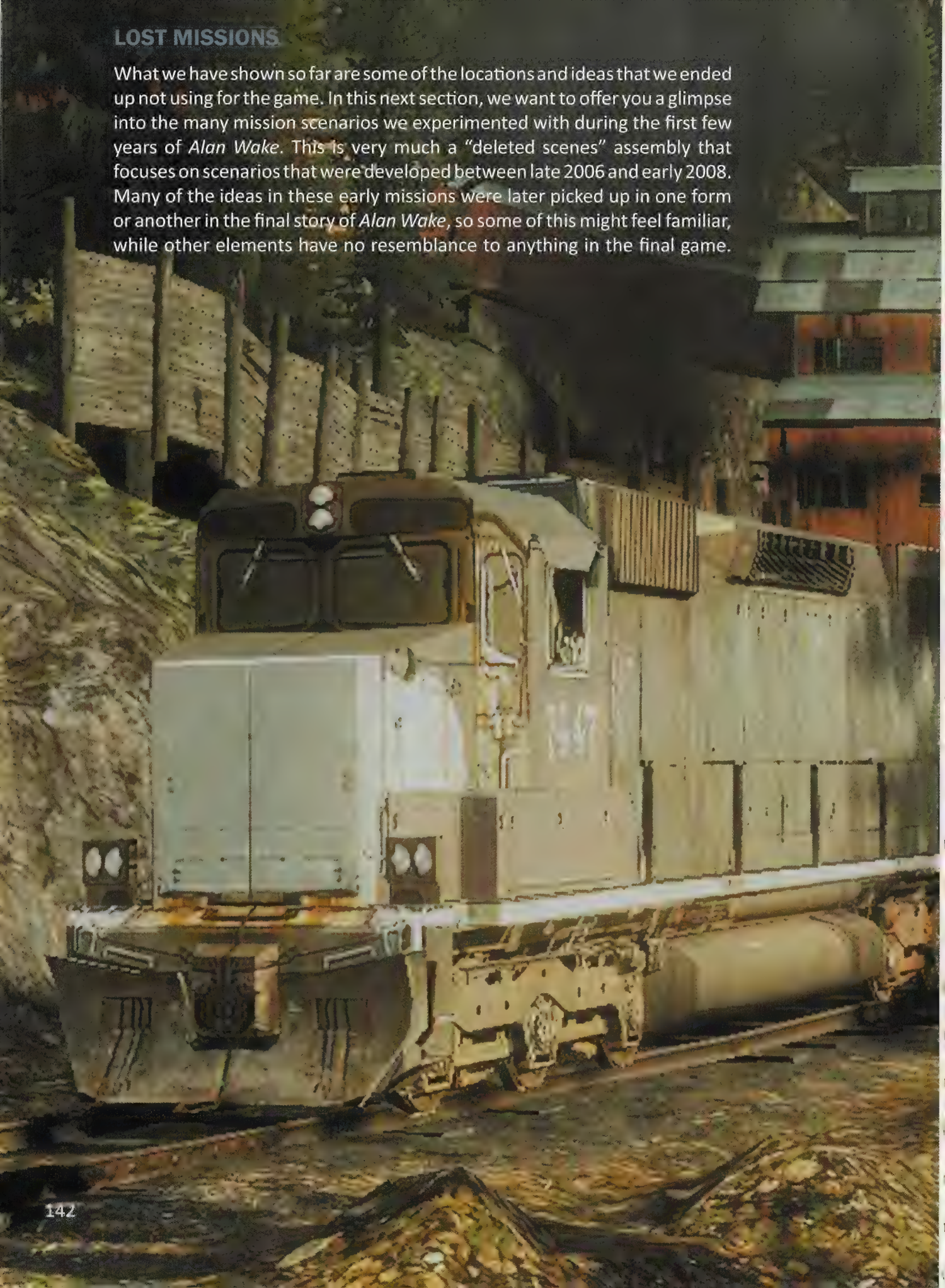
THE RACE TRACK

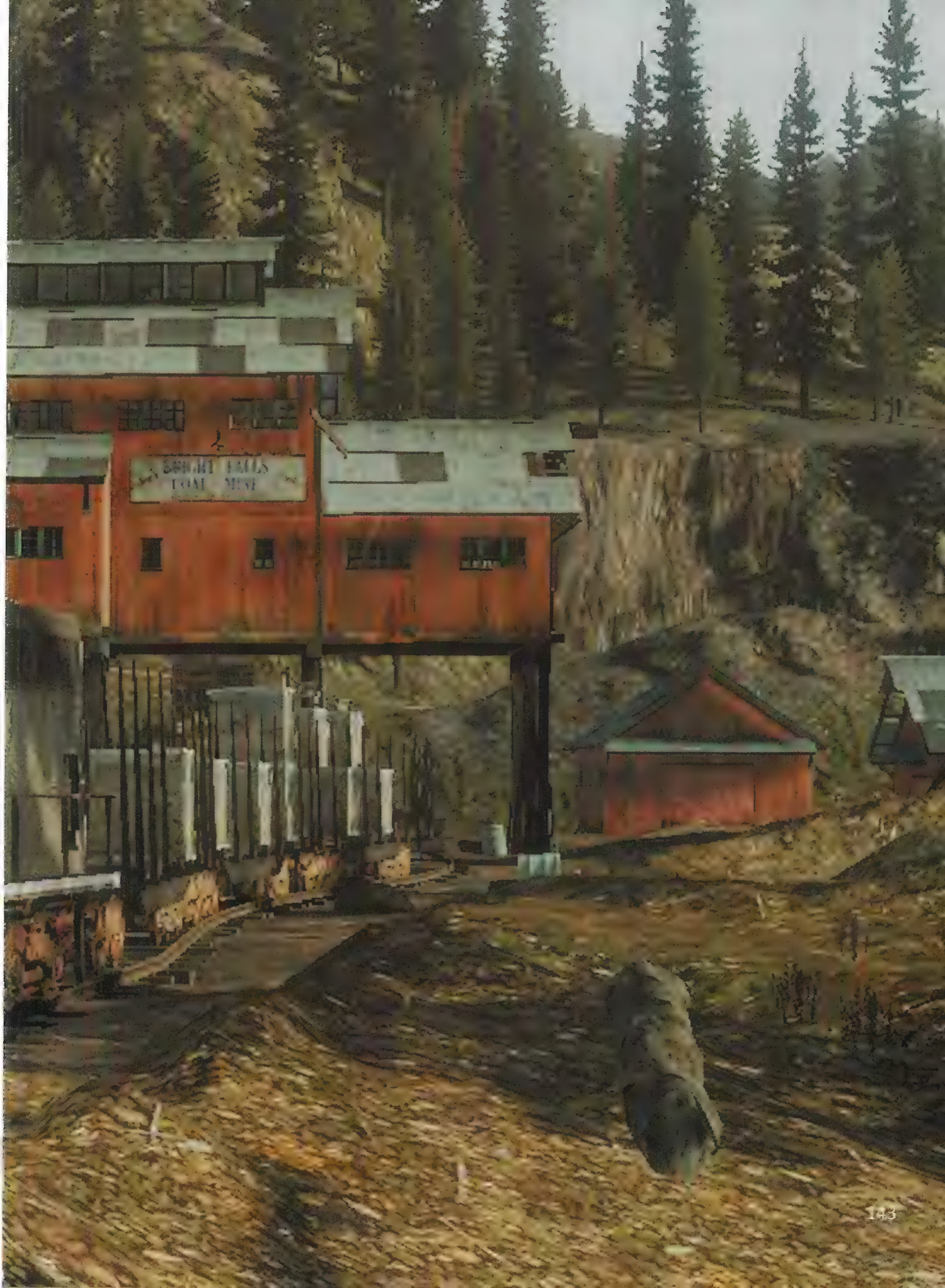
During the early open world design of *Alan Wake*, the team added several locations that were intended to serve as functional environments, and which could simply be used to have fun. One of these concepts was a race track that would have allowed players to race against other vehicles whenever they wanted to.



LOST MISSIONS

What we have shown so far are some of the locations and ideas that we ended up not using for the game. In this next section, we want to offer you a glimpse into the many mission scenarios we experimented with during the first few years of *Alan Wake*. This is very much a "deleted scenes" assembly that focuses on scenarios that were developed between late 2006 and early 2008. Many of the ideas in these early missions were later picked up in one form or another in the final story of *Alan Wake*, so some of this might feel familiar, while other elements have no resemblance to anything in the final game.



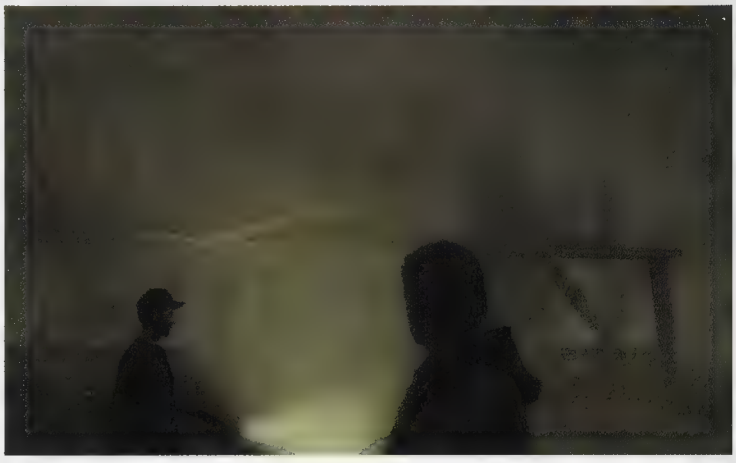


SCENARIO 3

During October and November of 2006, we were testing out various nighttime gameplay scenarios. We wanted answers to important questions concerning the technical limitations of the lighting system and how NPC scripting and AI would be handled in an open world. We used the newly-developed Anderson Farm environment as the backdrop for this test.



The scene begins with Wake and a friend at the Anderson Farm. Night has fallen and suddenly the lights in the house go out. The two men have to get the generator started in a nearby barn. Wake is only equipped with a flashlight, while his friend has a pistol. Wake suspects there is something out there in the dark, but he is not sure.





As the pair carefully proceeds down the hill toward the barn, they start hearing whispers in the darkness ahead. The whispers get louder and louder and then, with a bright flash, several hooded men appear out of nowhere. Alan tries to point his flashlight on these creatures, but they disappear as quickly as they had emerged from the darkness. Now in a panic, the two men run toward the barn and manage to start the generator, which turns the lights in the barn back on and the creatures of darkness disappear.



We felt that the test was quite successful. The single light source of the flashlight in a sea of darkness that is populated with fast-moving and difficult-to-see enemies was a theme that was carried all the way through to the final game. We also felt that the cooperative nature between Wake and a friend was compelling. This was the kernel of what later became our mission with Mott, and then Barry and Breaker.

SCENARIO 4

During the same time, in November 2006, we also experimented with non-combat gameplay and driving sequences. The idea here was that daytime would provide some safety from the enemies and would allow Wake to prepare for the dark forces at night. We constructed a scenario in which Wake had to walk and drive from place to place in order to prepare for an attack the following night. He had to find light sources and generators and bring them to a farm before nightfall.



BIRD LEG HOUSE

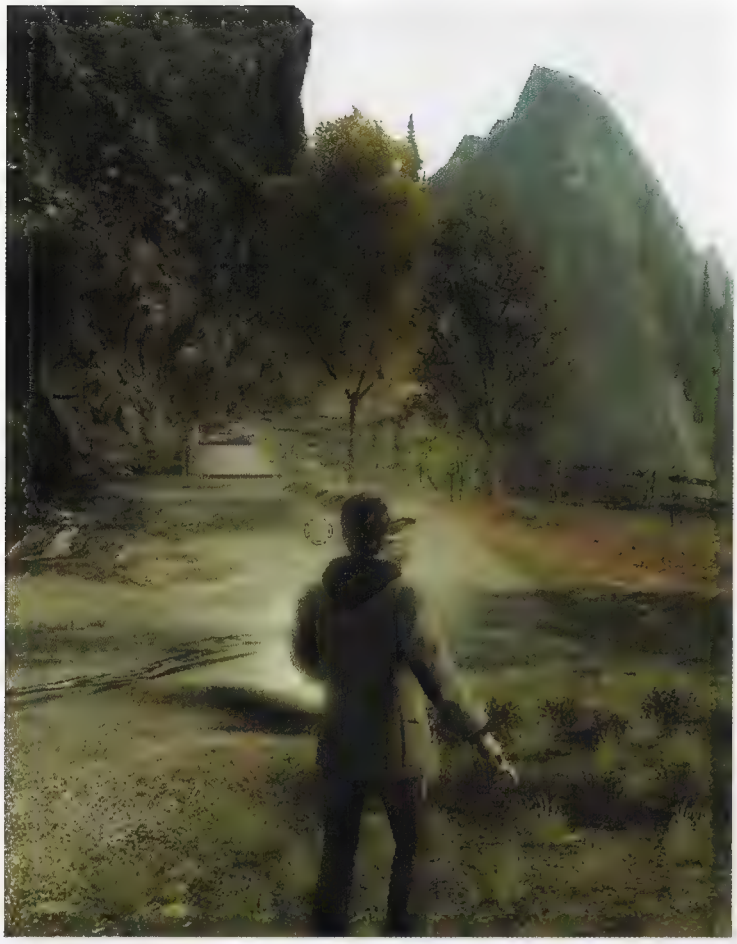
By March 2007, we produced a rough version of a potential first episode for the game. We focused on mission flow, pacing, and functionality and did not spend much time on audio or visual polish. The episode begins with the camera flying over the sun-filled mountains of the great Northwest. Passing over the town of Bright Falls and near the edge of Cauldron Lake, the camera slowly moves toward a cabin on the rim of a volcanic crater.







Inside, Alan wakes up and goes downstairs where he meets Alice. Wake asks if she likes his latest manuscript, a sequel to his first book. The story, a psychological action thriller, is about a struggling artist working as a night watchman when he meets a mysterious woman. They fall in love. The night watchman starts having strange dreams, which he begins writing down. Before he knows it, his manuscript pages form the basis of a book telling a disturbing story about a similarly mysterious woman. When the woman he has met vanishes without a trace, the events surrounding her disappearance are closely mirrored by the events in the manuscript. Wake leaves the cabin and walks outside, where he runs into his agent, Barry. He tells him that he has to go to nearby Bird Leg House.



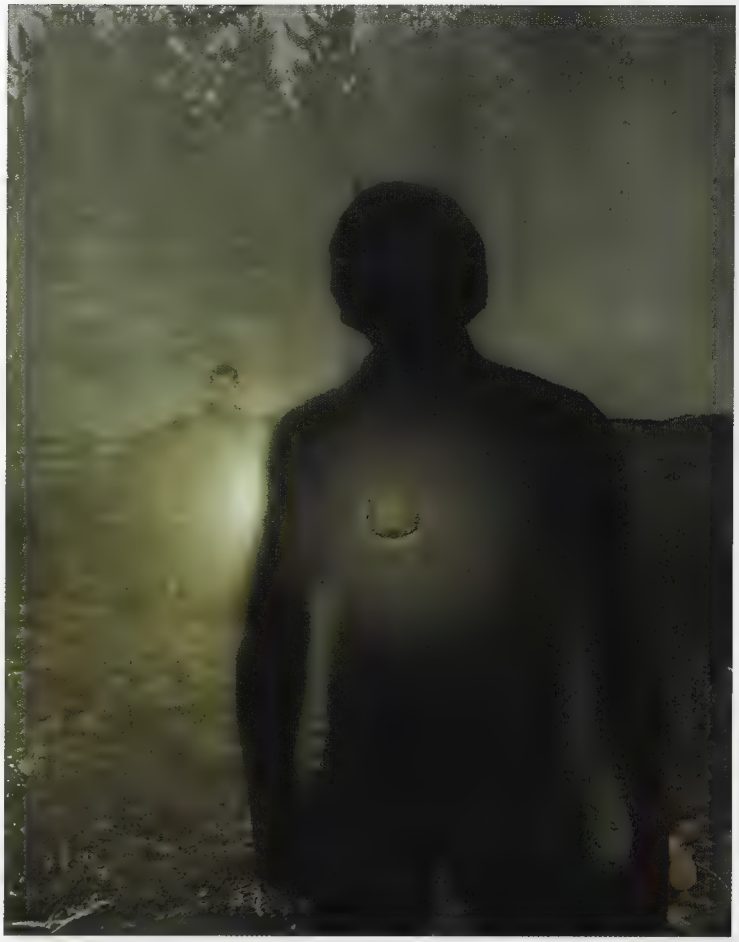
Wake leaves the cabin and walks outside, where he runs into his agent, Barry. Wake tells him that he has to go to nearby Bird Leg House. He proceeds along the trail and runs into a rotting animal carcass before he hears a monstrous scream in the forest ahead, followed by the breaking of trees. The entire ground shakes violently as if something gigantic is approaching.



Suddenly, Wake hears a scream. It's Alice. The ground shakes violently and large boulders fall down the mountainside next to the path. Wake hears the horrible breathing of the monster in the forest and then another scream. Alice screams over and over for Wake. Someone or something is trying to take her.

Barry stands in the middle of the path holding a metal suitcase. A torch logo is painted on the side, the same logo that was on Alice's sweatshirt. Barry eagerly reminds Wake that he is looking out for him, but that he has to go on this hero's quest to save Alice and he's packed Wake a bag. He reminds Wake that home is where his heart is, over and over. Barry opens the suitcase and blinding light floods out. A heartbeat can be heard and Barry climbs into the suitcase and disappears. The light disappears in a flash and is replaced by another strange light coming from farther up the path. It is the Diver.

The mission culminates with Wake running back to save Alice in the cabin. This sequence was compelling proof that our desire, to create a psychological action thriller was not just possible, but also very compelling.





EPISODE 2

Following that, we then spent eight weeks, until late May 2007, and developed an early version of Episode 2. The point was to show a linear mission with multiple playable characters that ended with a boss Shade.

This new mission was the first time we allowed players to control a character other than Wake. Switching characters and therefore story perspectives was, at the time, considered a part of the game flow and in line with our ambition to mimic a TV show format with an ensemble cast. In this case, you play FBI Agent Nightingale who is accompanied by his colleague Finnegan. The two agents are hot on Wake's trail, suspecting him to have murdered his wife Alice. As they arrive in Bright Falls, it is clear that something is wrong with Finnegan, but they still follow Wake's trail to a lumberyard near the town.





As Nightingale drives back to toward town, his surveillance equipment comes alive and shows that Wake is on the move again. Finally, Nightingale manages to catch up with Wake in Bright Falls.

They arrive at the lumberyard at night and Finnegan turns into a Shade. He tries to convince Nightingale to join the dark side, but the FBI agent refuses and kills Finnegan.

The player then switches back to Wake, who is in Bright Falls, though there are only a few people left in the town. The streets are deserted and the remaining

inhabitants have erected barricades to protect themselves. Many of the townspeople have already been taken over by the darkness and as the sun sets, more are certain to be taken. Wake desperately tries to find Mayor Biltmore.





As night falls – portals open and Shades begin to attack. Wake has to find a way to close all the portals using his flashlight, but these portals also contain secrets to the mystery of Alice's disappearance. Meanwhile, the Sheriff has turned into a Taken and Wake tracks down this boss in the area near the town's harbor. He finds that his flashlight can unveil the Sheriff's footsteps and tracks him to the industrial area.



The player then switches back to Agent Nightingale at the town church, who is now catching up to Wake. He talks to the townspeople who have ended up in the town's church fighting against the Shades. Ultimately, the mission ends when Wake and the Sheriff have a battle in the harbor area where Wake has to fight both tornadoes and the highly dangerous Sheriff boss.



RUNAWAY TRAIN

Between June and August 2007, we spent a significant amount of time developing a twenty minute linear experience in our open world. Ultimately, we felt that while it was workable, we did not have quite enough control over the timing of the experience as we wanted and obviously, timing is a key element for a thriller.

We then decided to invest a few months into focused prototypes with the intent to create "memorable moments" in the *Alan Wake* experience. One of these prototypes involved a train. Starting in the coal mine, Wake had to escape a number of enemies that were closing in on him by jumping on a moving train.



This was an exciting timed mission with an awesome cliffhanger ending (literally) as Wake had to dodge shots from the surrounding enemies, while progressing from the back of the train all the way to the cockpit. If he doesn't manage to make it to the cocpit in time, the train reaches a destroyed bridge where it falls into an abyss.







PLANE CRASH

Another memorable moment we developed was the introduction of a burning airplane that, while on fire, attempts a landing on an open farm area. Wake, who happens to be in the area, sees the burning plane flying dangerously close to the ground and crashing into a nearby field.

Attempting to see if there are any survivors who might need assistance, Wake runs to the plane to investigate, only to find no passengers on board.

As he gets close to the plane, the scene suddenly turns dark and a bright light moves across the horizon in the distance. Drawn to it, Wake follows the light to investigate. This concept of following a light to assist in the navigation of our huge open world was also used in another "memorable moment" during this phase of development.





UFO SCENARIO

What we ended up calling the "UFO scenario" starts with Wake is a small building near an orchard, standing next to a corpse. A bright light appears outside and Wake exits the building. A strange humming emanates from the object as it moves slowly away.

Wake decides to follow the light, which moves slowly across the orchard and into an open field where it stops. As Wake gets closer to the light, an old vehicle gets lifted up in the air and a man runs past Wake, clearly disturbed by what is happening.







As Wake gets close to the light, the vehicle abruptly drops to the ground and the light starts moving again. It flies over a forest and illuminates a path that Wake follows for several minutes. After crossing a bridge, he sees that the light has stopped again, this time above a building on the shore of a nearby lake.



The building starts shaking violently and is pulled from its foundation and up in the air toward the light. Wake looks in awe as the building is pulled up to the light in a kind of abduction scenario. Along with it go the pier it was standing on, a nearby parked vehicle and other small objects.

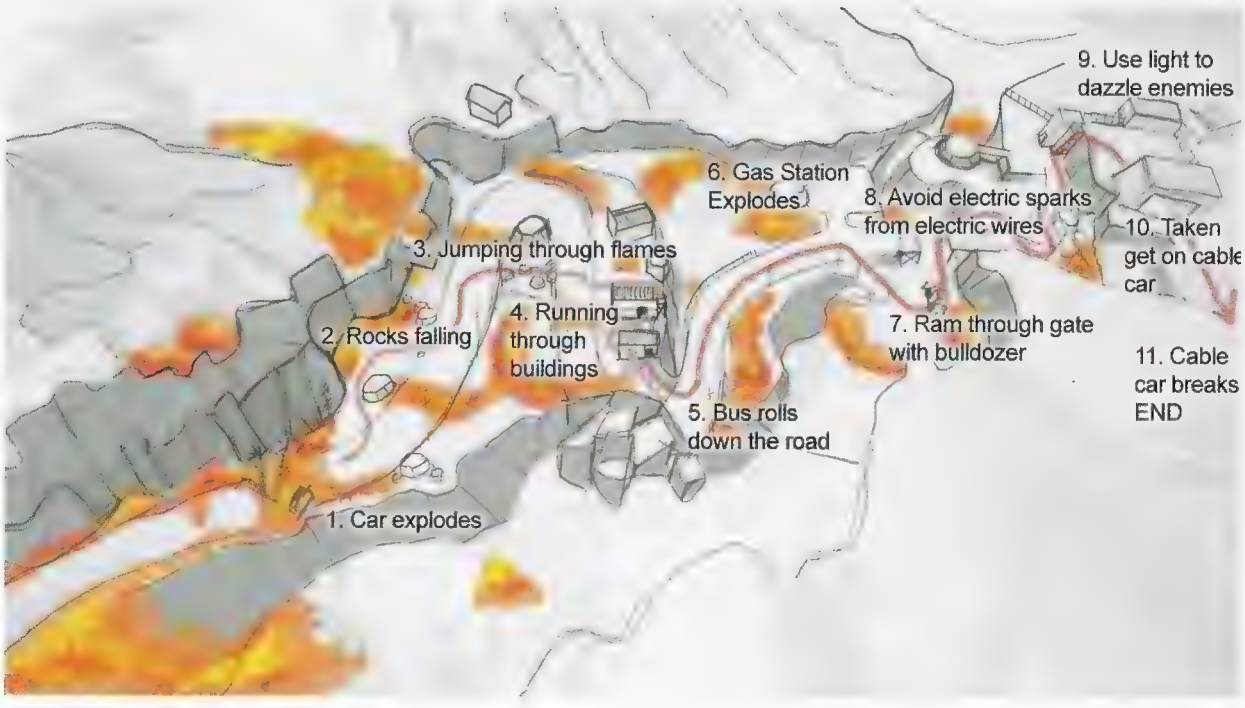
Right before the building reaches the light phenomenon, the light suddenly turns off and all of the objects fall to the ground with a crash. The remaining small light then flies off at an incredibly high speed. This "UFO" was quite cool and memorable and helped us answer some pathfinding questions.



THE FRYING PAN

The Frying Pan mission was in development for a few months in early 2008. Given our Northwest setting, we had always liked the idea of having a large forest fire in the game and our engine team had provided all of the tools we needed.

The sequence is unlike anything we released in the final game. Sarah's calls Wake on a cell phone, urgently telling him to wake up. As Wake comes to, he looks around and finds himself lying on the street next to a wrecked car. Flames crackle all around him and a deep rumbling sound comes from off-screen.



Sarah explains that an earthquake has caused a massive forest fire that is rapidly spreading and that Wake is in imminent danger. She explains that she's at the top station of an aerial lift and that she will send a gondola down to get him to safety. Wake understands that he has to get to the base station as quickly as possible, but large areas of the path are already blocked by the forest fire. The only way to get there leads Wake through a narrow opening between cliff walls.







Sarah tells Wake to get quickly get out of there and as he stumbles away from the car, the burning vehicle explodes. As Wake stumbles on, the ground shakes in an aftershock. (We were experimenting with the concept of frequent earthquakes as part of the game at the time.)



As Wake runs through the opening in the cliff, an aftershock from the quake causes several large rocks to crash down onto the narrow path and Wake only narrowly escapes being hit by the giant boulders.





As he emerges from the cliff, he is virtually surrounded by fire. Buildings are burning and the road is blocked in both directions. The only way forward is through a group of burning buildings and Wake has to run up the stairs into a building that is already partially on fire.







As Wake enters the burning building, several gas containers explode and suddenly, the house is filled with smoke; fire is everywhere. Feverishly, Wake has to break through one of the walls and just barely makes it out before the entire house collapses. As he lands on the road below the house, Sarah frantically yells into the cell phone and tells Wake to jump out of the way immediately...and just in time, because a yellow school bus crashes into the railing beside him.







After this narrow escape, Wake continues down the road toward the base station of the aerial lift. Sarah tells him that she has sent down a gondola, but that she is now seeing movement in the area. She assumes that these are enemies that have been alerted by the moving gondola and she tells Wake to hurry.

He runs down the street toward a small bridge when another tremor hits and causes a storage unit with flammable gas containers to explode. The shockwave of the giant explosion throws Wake to the ground. As he gets up, he finds that the bridge ahead has been destroyed by the explosion and he now has to find another way to the base station.



He jumps down on the right side of the bridge and sees that several crashed vehicles are blocking the path ahead. Suddenly, Wake is attacked by several enemies and manages to defeat them with his pistol. Sarah tells him that more enemies are in the area and Wake franticly searches for a way out. Soon, he finds a bulldozer parked in an area nearby and manages to push the destroyed cars to the side.



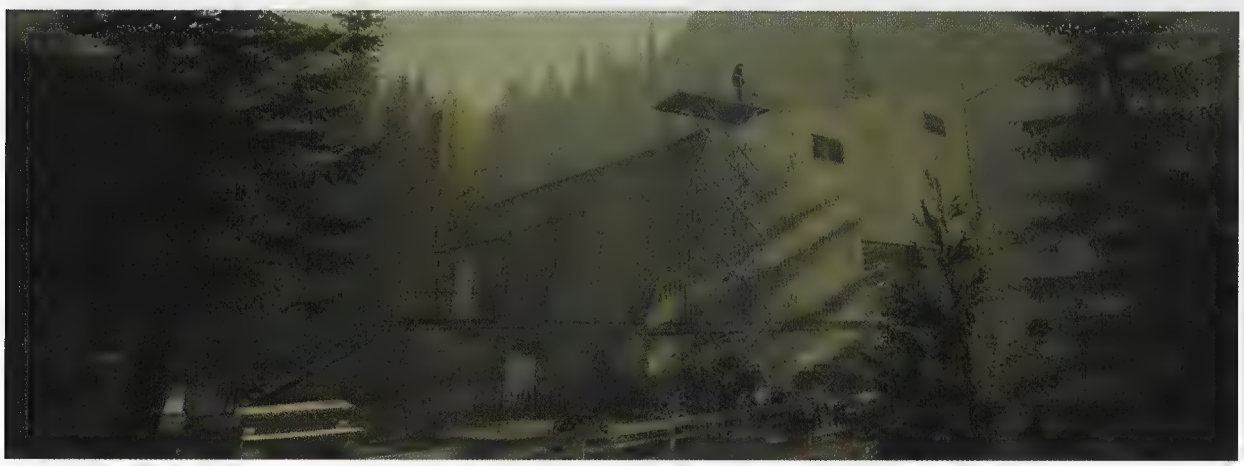


The way to the base station of the aerial lift appears free now, but as Wake drives the bulldozer up the short road to the base station, another tremor hits and large burning tree trunks roll down the road and block further progress in the bulldozer. To make matters worse, Sarah calls Wake and tells him that more enemies are closing in on his position.



Wake leaves the vehicle behind and runs up a steep path to the station that is now visible directly ahead of him. Running toward the safety of the station, Wake has to avoid several burning barrels that are tumbling down the path and has to be careful with a flaming jet of liquid gas jetting out of a nearby canister, before he finally reaches the base station. There, he has to fight off several Taken and barely escapes their ambush. Trying desperately to get to the gondola and with it to safety, Wake finds all of the doors locked and has to climb a maintenance platform to reach the roof of the structure.



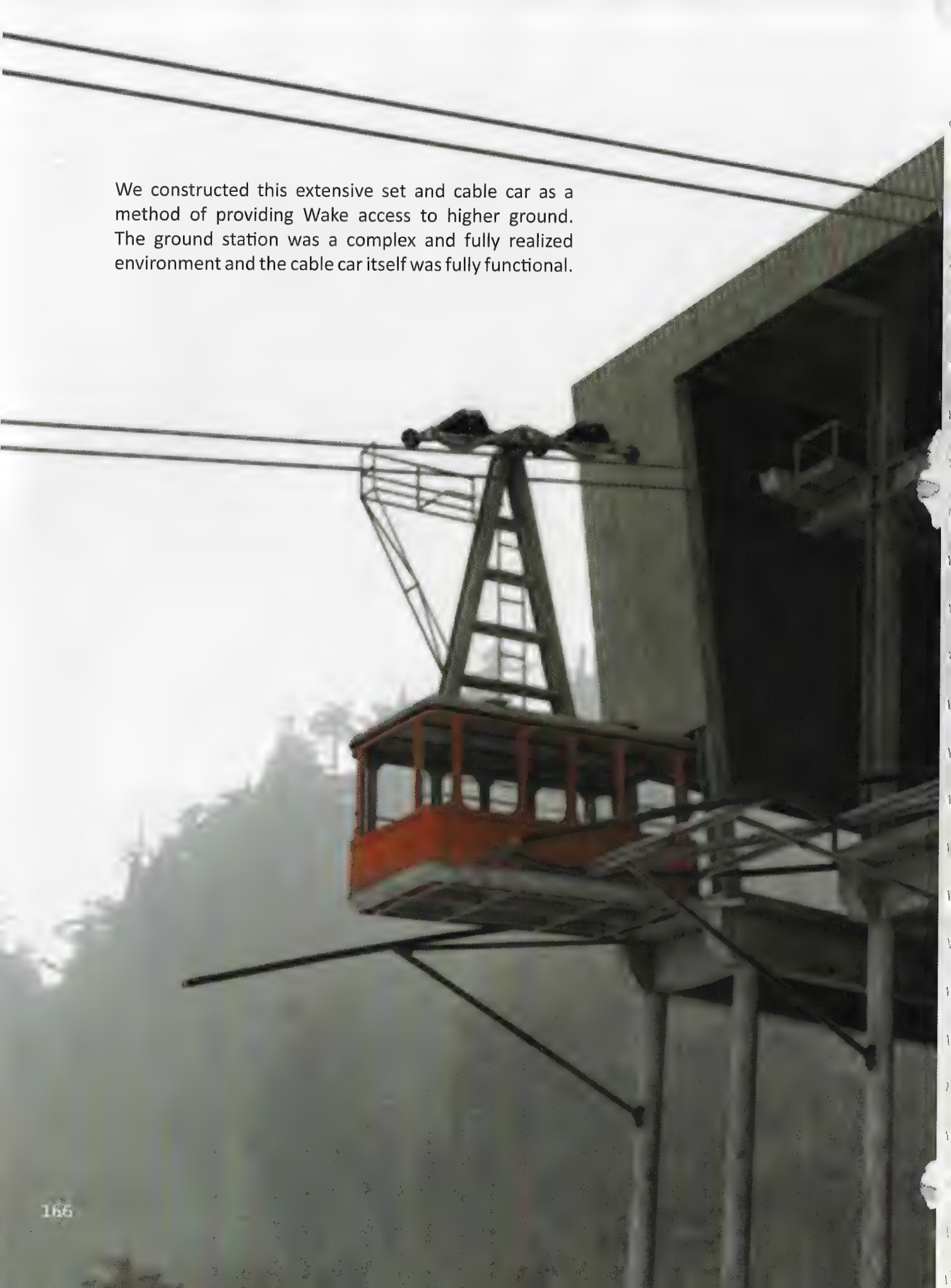




Once inside, he finds that the gondola is stuck on the second floor of the building, and that the only access is via an elevator. Sarah explains that the tremor must have caused a fuse to blow and tells Wake that the circuit breakers are outside near the fence. Wake hurries back outside, manages to fix the problem, and gets into the gondola. Once there, he is attacked by a group of Taken and he has to duck inside as the gondola starts moving toward the top of the mountain.



We constructed this extensive set and cable car as a method of providing Wake access to higher ground. The ground station was a complex and fully realized environment and the cable car itself was fully functional.





While traveling in the gondola, the high drama continues. Another tremor occurs, causing a cable of the aerial lift to snap, and the gondola sways dangerously before getting stuck. Wake has to exit the gondola and use a support tower to get to the ground. With the Taken getting closer and closer and the daytime fading, Wake's situation gets rapidly worse. As Wake reached the ground, the sun sets and Taken appear from the forest. He is surrounded, and the episode ends in one of our typical cliffhangers. This could have been a great episode, but it ultimately didn't fit into the storyline. Maybe we will revisit this in a future version of Alan Wake.

LEVEL 7: THE LIGHTHOUSE

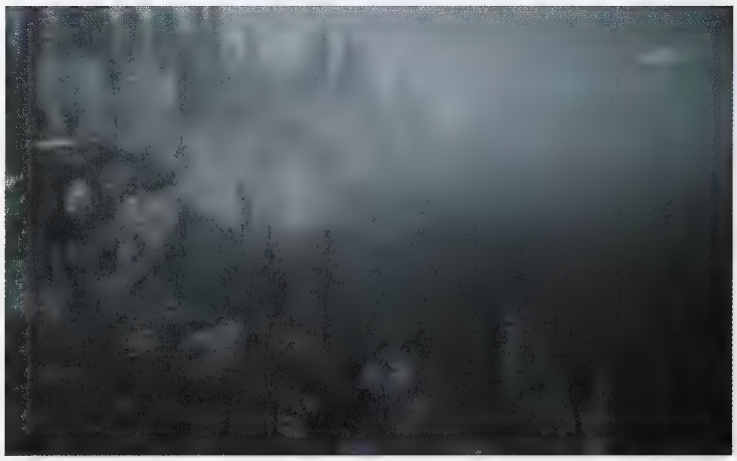
As the name indicates, the lighthouse level was originally a mission midway through the game, which made heavy use of our lighthouse location. One of the primary inspirations for this level was Alfred Hitchcock's classic, *The Birds*, as it was the first appearance of the bird flock as an enemy type. It was also one of the first levels in which we had Barry performing the sidekick function of traveling with Wake and reacting to events in a humorous fashion, giving more of a TV series-like experience.



The level began with Wake and Barry arriving at Rain Cove by seaplane to investigate a story about another cabin, a replica of Thomas Zane's cabin on Diver's Isle. As they explore the area near the dock, the seaplane pilot turns into a Taken and attacks Wake and Barry. While Barry manages to get into a rowboat, he is pulled away by the currents before Wake is able to get in. Barry's boat begins floating up the coastline – to Barry's great distress – as Wake does his best to follow on foot.



Wake travels through our rocky coastline environment at night, through caves and along cliffs, under stormy skies. He makes his way past the carcass of a beached whale and the wreckage of a forgotten fishing boat, while being attacked by Taken birds. Wake finally manages to rescue Barry and they both travel to the lighthouse together.



They fight Taken along the way and start generators to protect the area before finally entering the lighthouse. When they reach the top, they discover that the light is broken and needs to be repaired. Barry shouts instructions up to Wake. A key must be found, then a spare part, all in time for the final combat using the lighthouse light against swarms of attacking birds.





We were sad to see this level go and made the difficult decision of cutting it in order to focus on other parts of the game. We consoled ourselves with the knowledge that the lighthouse would make its way back into Wake's story in later episodes.

MIDNIGHT IN BIRD LEG GROVE

After we had decided to go with a linear mission structure, we immediately began implementing some of the storylines we had already made progress on. The first of these episodes was called "Midnight in Bird Leg Grove," some of which was repurposed in Episode 2 of the final game in which Wake must meet the kidnapper.



It begins with Wake and Barry staying in a cabin in the Elderwood National Park. Barry peers out the window and nervously jokes about all the horrible things lurking in the forest as Wake prepares to leave. He has received an anonymous note from someone who claims to have pages from his manuscript. He ventures out, eventually making his way to an observation platform where he looks through the binoculars toward Bird Leg Grove.







As he proceeds down the trail, he doubles over in pain. When he stands, it seems as though he is in a dream. Everything moves slowly and he and Barbara Jagger stand facing each other under a cone of light. Jagger speaks of Taken, darkness, "a miracle, illuminated," and places a manuscript page on a tree stump. The cone of light flickers and she disappears. Wake grips his head in pain. He ventures further along the road, through more tremors, eventually arriving at the Elderwood Visitor Center where he hears the voice of a ranger calling for help.









The Visitor Center is badly damaged and the ranger sits in a pool of blood, impaled by a fallen support beam. He begs Wake to get the lights on and gives him the key to the office. Wake makes his way to the circuit breaker in the office and on his return, the ranger has disappeared.



He decides to continue on to Bird Leg Grove, following the trail through the forest until he reaches a gigantic tree that has been hollowed out to form a tunnel. He hears the crack of a branch, sees a shadow, and realizes someone is stalking him.

A flash of light appears again and under the cone it is Jagger. She tells him "In light you can hurt them." He finds another manuscript page and begins to read it when the ranger appears as a Taken who tells Wake that his writing has call the darkness. The culminating combat involves Wake's realization that he can use light to defeat Taken.

This mission was immensely helpful in defining how we would later build our episodes and tell the story of *Alan Wake*.




Welcome to
Bright Falls
Tourist Map
Skiing resort
Donna's cafe
Hiking trail
Radio QWK
Heall center
Camping
Gas station



Home of the annual Deer fest!

Pie eating contest!

Rock climbing

Barbeque

Music

Stand up comic

..and much more!!



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